As far back as 1874, the North West Council members had complained to the federal government

> that this Council deeply regret that the Privy Council has not been pleased to communicate their approval or disapproval of the legislation and many resolutions adopted by Council at their meetings held on the 4th, 8th, 11th and 13th September, 1873, March 11th, 12th, 14th, 16th, 1874, and June 1st and 2nd, 1874, and they respectfully represent that such long delay has paralyzed the action of the Council.[12]

The government not only ignored proposed legislation from the North West Council; it also reserved the right to disallow any ordinances of the Council that it did not find acceptable. More importantly, the federal government retained absolute and direct control over the administration of both Indian affairs and the mounted police force. The only compromise made to the people of the West by the federal government was the provision for a limited number of elected representatives who could be allowed onto the council. It took a proclamation by the Lieutenant Governor, however, to initiate even this limited form of representative government.

Nevertheless, the North West Council had been used by the federal government to placate potentially powerful ethnic groups, such as the Metis, by placing token representatives on the council. In this way, Pascal Breland, a well-known Metis traitor who had worked for Riel's downfall in 1869, was appointed to the council in 1882 in response to Metis requests for a French-speaking delegate.

By 1882, it was becoming clear to many people in the North West Territories that the North West Council had failed and would continue to fail to redress western grievances. It had failed to protect farmers from the high tariffs imposed by the federal government on farm machinery. It had failed to obtain surveys for people of all nationalities who occupied lands in the territory. As a result, extra-parliamentary methods of protest began to develop in the West. Many of the protest groups began to petition the Department of the Interior, begging for surveys and title to the lands they occupied. For the White settlers as well as the land speculators in Prince Albert, the lack of surveys and the absence of titles for their lands prevented growth or expansion of businesses and farms. Loans could not be obtained from banks, and it was difficult to transact business in such a situation. These concerns were reflected in petitions,

which were first circulated in 1881 when Lawrence Clarke was elected to the North West Council.

In fact, the Metis, who also participated in Clarke's program of petitions, already had a history of petitioning the federal government over land questions and other grievances. In May, 1873, Indian and Metis citizens had written Lieutenant-Governor Morris, complaining that men like Dr. Schultz were being rewarded for their actions against the Metis by being appointed to the North West Council.[13] In 1874, the Metis of the North West petitioned the government to enact laws for the protection of the buffalo, to which Morris responded, "The North West Council will be ready to give the matter their most serious considerations."[14] Despite such negative or noncommittal answers, however, the Metis continued, with the urging of the priests, to petition the government for their rights.

In a petition acknowledged by the Department of the Interior on May 17, 1878, the French-speaking Metis of the North West Territories asked for a grant of $5.00 per pupil for the opening of schools, and for the issuing of scrip to all those who had not received it under the Manitoba Act. This petition still stands as proof that the Metis wanted to be allowed into the commercial farming economy like other residents of the North West Territories. It stated:

> The sudden transition from prairie to agricultural life necessitated by the rapid disappearance of the buffalo and the orders in Council of the N.W. Territories as regards hunting, have brought your petitioners to their last resources and compels them to address themselves to the federal government to obtain therefrom assistance in acquiring agricultural implements. Those instruments, excessively scarce, are only sold here at prices so exhorbitant that your petitions are for the most part, unable to procure any.[15]

Clearly, the Metis wanted to become farmers and enter into the new wheat economy as full participants, like their English-speaking cousins and White neighbors were being allowed to do. Furthermore, they knew what was required to achieve this goal: capital for farm machinery. As well, they wanted political representation on the North West Council, money for education, and title to the lands they occupied. Tariffs, integral to the federal government's national policy of protection for eastern industry, were preventing the Metis from entering the wheat economy

by placing the price of vital farm machinery beyond the reach of the Metis.

This petition was acknowledged by the Department of the Interior. A letter from the Department assured the petitioners that their communication would be sent on to the Governor General in Council. David Laird, Lieutenant Governor of the North West Territories at that time, in forwarding the petition commented:

> Though the petition is addressed to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, yet as it refers to questions for the most part wholly under the conrol of the Dominion Parliament and Government, I am requested to forward it to His Excellency the Governor General in Council . . .
>
> Should it be the intention of the Government to appoint any additional members to the Council of the North-West Territories, the prayer of the petitioners that such should be selected from the old residents of the country is well worthy of consideration.
>
> It is important that the land policy of the Government towards old settlers and others living for many years in the Territories should be declared. It appears to me that they have a claim to some more speedy means of acquiring a title for settlement purposes than the homestead provision of the Dominion Lands Act.
>
> To prevent disputes between neighbours, it is highly desirable that the survey of lands settled upon along the principal rivers should be prosecuted with all convenient speed.
>
> With respect to the prayer for assistance in procuring seeds and implements to commence farming operations, it is similar to the request made to me by the [Metis] of Bow River during the Blackfoot treaty negotiations, and which I forwarded to you and commended to the favourable consideration of the Government.[16]

The petition and Lieutenant-Governor Laird's recommendations alike were ignored by the federal government. This document, like so many others, was buried somewhere in the Department of the Interior until it was exhumed and brought down for parliamentary discussion *after* the rebellion of 1885.

The confusing question of land title was further exacerbated in the Prince Albert region when large tracts of land were set aside by the federal government to be used as a land grant to the CPR. In 1880, a petition from Prince Albert requested the appointment of a commission to

investigate Metis claims in the North West Territories, and to compensate people whose lands were given to the CPR. This petition again reminded the federal government that many Metis families living in the North West Territories had not received scrip in Manitoba. Again, they described the hardships placed upon people who were not able to acquire title to the land they occupied. The petition stated:

> And whereas the section of the Regulation issued by the Department of the Interior on October 14th, 1879, respecting the disposal of certain public lands for the purpose of the Canadian Pacific Railway, all payments for Railway lands . . . shall be in cash and not in scrip or military or police bounty . . . And whereas we humbly believe that this exclusion of our scrip owing to the immense reserves which have been created [for C.P.R. land] practically amounts to a confiscation and involves a great injustice . . . We pray that the laws of 1879 may be modified so as to administer scrip at its face value in the purchase of lands within the railway reserves.[17]

In this petition the Metis made the following additional points:

1. that scrip be issued to all who had not received it under the Manitoba Act;
2. that payments be made to people whose holdings were confiscated when their land was set aside as a grant to the Canadian Pacific Railway;
3. that a Commission should be appointed to investigate and deal with these matters.

Again, the petition was, for all practical purposes, ignored by the federal government. Certainly no action was taken on these requests.

On September 4th, 1882, the following petition was sent directly to Sir John A. Macdonald from the Metis of St. Antoine-de-Padoue. This communication clearly described the problems of the Metis, caused in large part by the government's refusal to deal with them:

> Compelled, most of us, to abandon the prairie, which can no longer furnish us the means of subsistence, we came in large numbers, during the course of the summer, and settled on the south branch of the Saskatchewan; pleased with the land and country, we set ourselves actively to work clearing the land, but in hope of sowing next spring, and also to prepare our houses for the winter now advancing rapidly. The surveyed lands already occupied or sold, we were compelled to occupy

lands not yet surveyed, being ignorant, for the most part, also, of the regulations of the Government respecting Dominion lands. Great then was our astonishment and perplexity when we were notified that when the lands are surveyed we shall be obliged to pay $2 an acre to the Government, if our lands are included in odd-numbered sections. We desire, moreover, to keep close together, in order more easily to secure a school and a church. We are poor people and cannot pay for our land without utter ruin, and losing the fruits of our labor and seeing our lands pass into the hands of strangers, who will go to the land office at Prince Albert and pay the amount fixed by the Government. In our anxiety we appeal to your sense of justice as Minister of the Interior and head of the Government, and beg you to reassure us speedily, by directing that we shall not be disturbed on our lands, and that the Government grant us the privilege of considering us as occupants of even-numbered sections, since we have occupied these lands in good faith. Having so long held this country as its masters and so often defended it against the Indians at the price of our blood, we consider it not asking too much to request that the Government allow us to occupy our lands in peace, and that exception be made to its regulations, by making to the [Metis] of the North-West free grants of land. We also pray that you would direct that the lots be surveyed along the river ten chains in width by two miles in depth, this mode of division being the long-established usage of the country. This would render it more easy for us to know the limits of our several lots.

We trust, Sir, that you will grant a favorable hearing to this our petition, and that you will make known your decision as soon as possible. We await it with great anxiety and pray God to protect you and keep you for the direction of this great country which you so wisely govern.[18]

This petition was signed by Gabriel Dumont and forty-six others. Despite the conciliatory tone of the petition, and despite the urgency of the issues it described, nothing was done by the government to address the issues raised by Dumont and his fellows.

This petition was acknowledged by Lindsay Russell of the Department of the Interior on October 13, 1882. He wrote:

> I have the honour, by direction of the Minister of the Interior, to acknowledge the receipt through you, of a petition, dated 4th ult., from 47 French half-breeds, on the subject of certain lands on the Saskatchewan, in the district of Prince Albert, on which they have squatted.
>
> In reply, I am directed to request you to inform the petitioners that when the proper time arrives the case of each bona fide settler will be dealt with on its own merits; but as regards the surveying of land in question, that all lands in the N.W.T. will be surveyed according to the system now in force.[19]

Lindsay Russell's answer was clear. The Metis would not have their lands surveyed according to their desires. Even though the Red River system of land allotment had been incorporated for the English-speaking Metis, it would not be granted to the French Metis. Nor did Russell mention a waiver of the $2.00 per acre fee for people living on odd-numbered sections within the CPR tract. To the Metis involved, this omission would mean severe financial hardship.

Clearly, the government was not going to lift a finger to assist the Metis inhabiting the land along the south branch of the Saskatchewan River. Clearly, unless the land was surveyed according to the pattern of the existing Metis holdings, it would be impossible to obtain legal title later. In fact, the Department seemed to be retaining this land for the CPR for possible use as a major branch line, even though the main line of the CPR's transcontinental route had been shifted to the south in 1882.

By 1882, the federal government's blatant discrimination against the French Metis in the North West had aroused concern among local government officials. Fearing trouble, they began writing to Ottawa in support of the Metis petitions. The Metis had the sympathy of the land agent, George Duck, in Prince Albert, who wrote to the Department of the Interior in 1882:

> As the majority of the settlers on the south branch of the River Saskatchewan, in the vicinity of the parish of St. Laurent, have taken up their lands previous to the survey, with narrow frontages, similar to those river claims in other parts of this district, and in view of the difficulty likely to be experienced in this office in adjusting the boundaries of these claims in accordance with the section survey, I have, at the request of several of the settlers so situated, the honor to request information as to the possibility of re-surveying these sections

into river lots on a similar plan to that adopted in Prince Albert settlement, none of these claims having as yet been entered in this office.[20]

George Duck's request regarding the surveys required by the French Metis was curtly rejected. A. Burgess, Secretary, Department of the Interior, responded:

> I have the honor, by the direction of the Minister of the Interior to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th of March last, stating that you had been requested by several of the settlers in the vicinity of the parish of St. Laurent to obtain information from the Department as to the possibility of there being a resurvey of their river claims by the Government and to inform you that it is not the intention of the Government to cause any re-surveys to be made. Of course, a subdivision differing from the regular survey they may desire they can procure for themselves when the lands come into their possession. You will please, therefore, communicate this decision to the persons interested.[21]

The federal government was rejecting the French Metis' requests for both the type of survey they wanted and for title to the lands they occupied, even though it had accepted and granted identical requests in its dealings with the English-speaking Metis and White residents of the region.

Other petitions either from, or on behalf of, the French Metis were sent to the federal government over the years between 1872 and 1885. But like the ones shown here, they elicited a noncommittal or a negative response from government officials. And, like the petitions discussed here, they did not surface for discussion in parliament until after the rebellion of 1885.

Father André summed up the frustrations of the French Metis in April, 1883 in a letter to Lindsay Russell of the Department of the Interior:

> According to an old custom in Manitoba [the Metis] of St. Laurent took up their lots, ten chains wide in front by two miles in depth, trusting that the Government, acting on the rules already established, would survey these lands into lots ten chains in width by two miles in depth . . .
>
> I cannot understand, Sir, why your surveyors should have two different methods of parcelling the public domain; one for Prince Albert, ten chains in width by two miles in depth, which

> we approve, and which we claim as a right, seeing you have granted it to Prince Albert; the other, of blocking out the land in squares of forty chains, without taking the river nor location of the settlers into consideration. The latter method we protest solemnly against, all of us, and humbly pray, Sir, that you order a new survey, and thus validate our request.[22]

This letter was acknowledged on July 28, 1883, by John R. Hall, Acting Secretary, Department of the Interior, Ottawa. In his reply he refused to comply with André's requests for the old Red River style of survey. This letter did not come to light again until parliamentary discussions on causes of the rebellion were forced by the Liberal opposition in 1885.

For the Metis who occupied lands along the South Saskatchewan River from St. Laurent to Duck Lake, title to their land holdings was much more than an abstract legal question; it was fast becoming a matter of survival, since, by 1881, the buffalo were gone, and the HBC could no longer be relied upon for employment. Lawrence Clarke, as the elected representative for the District of Lorne, and as a private speculator with his eye on Metis land, had good reason to petition the federal government for land surveys and the issuing of land title to the inhabitants of his constituency. For him, and for other members of the Conservative clique of Prince Albert, such action was required before they could buy land from the present inhabitants.

Shortly after his being elected to office in 1881, Lawrence Clarke took charge of a petition from his constituents. This petition, or "memorial," as it was called, was mailed to the Lieutenant Governor, who forwarded it to Sir John A. Macdonald. In this petition Clarke asked for a land office to be established in Prince Albert. He described the serious disputes that, in the absence of a land survey, were erupting over land questions.[23] As a result of Clarke's request, a land agent, J.E. Sproat, was appointed as the registrar for deeds in Prince Albert.

Father André worked closely with Clarke on the composition of the memorial, appealing to the government on behalf of the French Metis. André's petition revealed a serious deterioration in the land situation in the French Metis settlements along the South Saskatchewan River. He stated that the previously requested surveys had not been carried out in any of the French Metis communities. This was leading to disputes between neighbors; even more seriously, new settlers were coming in, claiming property that was already occupied by Metis families.[24] Indeed,

André's own property had been claimed by a newcomer. André explained:

> I hold at Duck Lake a tract of land about two hundred acres of which I have been in peaceful possession for over several years. The land was fenced in and cost me a good deal of money and was always respected as the Catholic Missionaries' property at Duck Lake. I was one of the first settlers at that place and through my exertions the settlement increased rapidly, and nobody ever troubled me in my lawful possession of that land until last March, when a man by the name of J. Kelly jumped my claim and notwithstanding my protestations claimed the land as his own and put the frame of a house up on it, depriving me in that manner of half my property, and this is not the only occurrence of the kind at Duck Lake.[25]

While Clarke and André were describing essentially the same problems in this memorial, there were serious differences in the government's responses to the requests of the two ethnic groups they represented. The English-speaking residents represented by Clarke eventually obtained the surveys they wanted and title to their land. The French Metis, however, once again received neither.

By the end of 1882 the French Metis were becoming desperate. All around them their English-speaking neighbors were receiving title to their lands while their own petitions failed to elicit a favourable response from the government. They thought they were being persecuted because of their language and religion. In fact, they were being denied title to their lands because they were located on the land granted to the Prince Albert Colonization Company, whose Tory owners had no intention of settling with farmers, Metis or otherwise. This land was being retained for other purposes, having to do with the establishment of a rail centre and future urban development.

Because of the conflict of interest of the Tory politicians who were also speculators in the Prince Albert Colonization Company, the federal government began to appear as a hostile force determined to deny the French Metis the same rights eventually granted to all other ethnic groups in the country. In the meantime, the owners of the colonization companies and the members of the CPR syndicate, all of whom had benefited to an extraordinary degree from Tory legislation, began to compete with each other for further economic advantages in the West.

The CPR Moves South: Depression Grips the North West

The federal government, under the terms of the national policy of 1878, had placed the economic development of the West into the hands of two types of private companies who were bound to come into conflict with each other. The CPR syndicate represented international capital, since its members were made up of American railway barons, Canadian and foreign bankers, and successful Canadian entrepreneurs from the fur trade, such as Donald Smith. The colonization companies, on the other hand, represented Tory hacks, religious groups and a hodge-podge of emerging Canadian national capital, supported by the federal government. The former group had mastered the art of the manipulation of government; the latter were novices locked into an unequal struggle with their powerful former political companions.

The Canadian Pacific Railway contract, signed by the Honorable Charles Tupper, placed control of the vital first phase of the national policy into the hands of powerful domestic and foreign capitalists. Their development plans, supported by massive public funds and a government guarantee of a twenty-year monopoly, were bound to come into conflict with the free and healthy development of the West. Thus, Sir John A. Macdonald and his colleagues in power in Ottawa had effectively subordinated the fledgling Canadian state apparatus to the interests of a class of people who were bound, by tradition and normal self-interest, to use the enormous influence handed to them primarily for their own benefit.

On January 18, 1881, Edward Blake, a Liberal Member of Parliament, delivered a strong attack on these Tory policies. Speaking in the House of Commons, he accused the government of creating a monopoly that would be disastrous for prairie settlement. Blake alleged that sixteen abrogations of the Canadian Pacific Railway Act were to be found in the existing contract between the government and the syndicate. In all cases, he claimed, more power or more money was handed over to the syndicate than the Act allowed for. Blake claimed, furthermore, that all this business was completed without debate in the House. He commented:

> Why will the honourable gentlemen opposite, against light and reason, insist upon this contract? What is the reason we could not get the first offers? They are secret, and concealed from us. No advertisement was issued for this contract. The whole work was done in the dark.[26]

Despite the often brilliant attacks by Blake in Parliament, and a strong campaign by the Toronto Globe against the CPR deal, the Act Ratifying the Contract and Chartering the Canadian Pacific Railway was passed in February, 1881. The massive railway construction project made possible by this act was welcomed by bankers since it provided them with an investment bonanza wherein the Canadian government took all the risks. However, this project was presented to the Canadian people by Sir Charles Tupper, Minister of Railways and Canals, as a program of philanthropy designed to help the unemployed people of both Europe and Canada.[27]

The value of the total gift from the Conservative government to the CPR is difficult to determine, since hundreds of miles of existing rail lines of unknown value were included, as well as land and cash. The CPR was given $25 million, plus twenty-five million acres of land in the West, much of it along the proposed northern route across the prairies. The CPR was given the existing rail lines of the Lake Superior section that ran from Fort William (now Thunder Bay) to Winnipeg, and a western section that ran from Kamloops to Port Moody in British Columbia, as well as some rail lines in Manitoba.[28] Some of the people involved with the CPR who profited from this public largess were: George Stephen and Richard Angus, Canadian bankers; James J. Hill, an American railway baron; and Donald Smith (the same Donald Smith who opposed Riel in 1869-70), the former Chief Commissioner of the HBC, and a former Tory MP. The banking firms involved were Morton, Rose and Co., of London, and Kohn, Reinach and Co., of Paris.[29]

Given this background of international business interests, it is understandable that the CPR syndicate was not in the railroad business for patriotic reasons. Nor was the CPR in business to help the immigrants or the Natives, or, for that matter, Conservative speculators who had used government information to pick their land grants along the planned route of the CPR.

The Conservative government, however, had hoped that the investors in the land monopolies would be successful in the West; this would have created a powerful class of Conservative landowners that would bolster

the Party in the West. However, the power brokers of the CPR were not happy with these Tory speculators who were acquiring property along the proposed rail line, property that the CPR investors had planned to use for their own highly profitable development ventures.

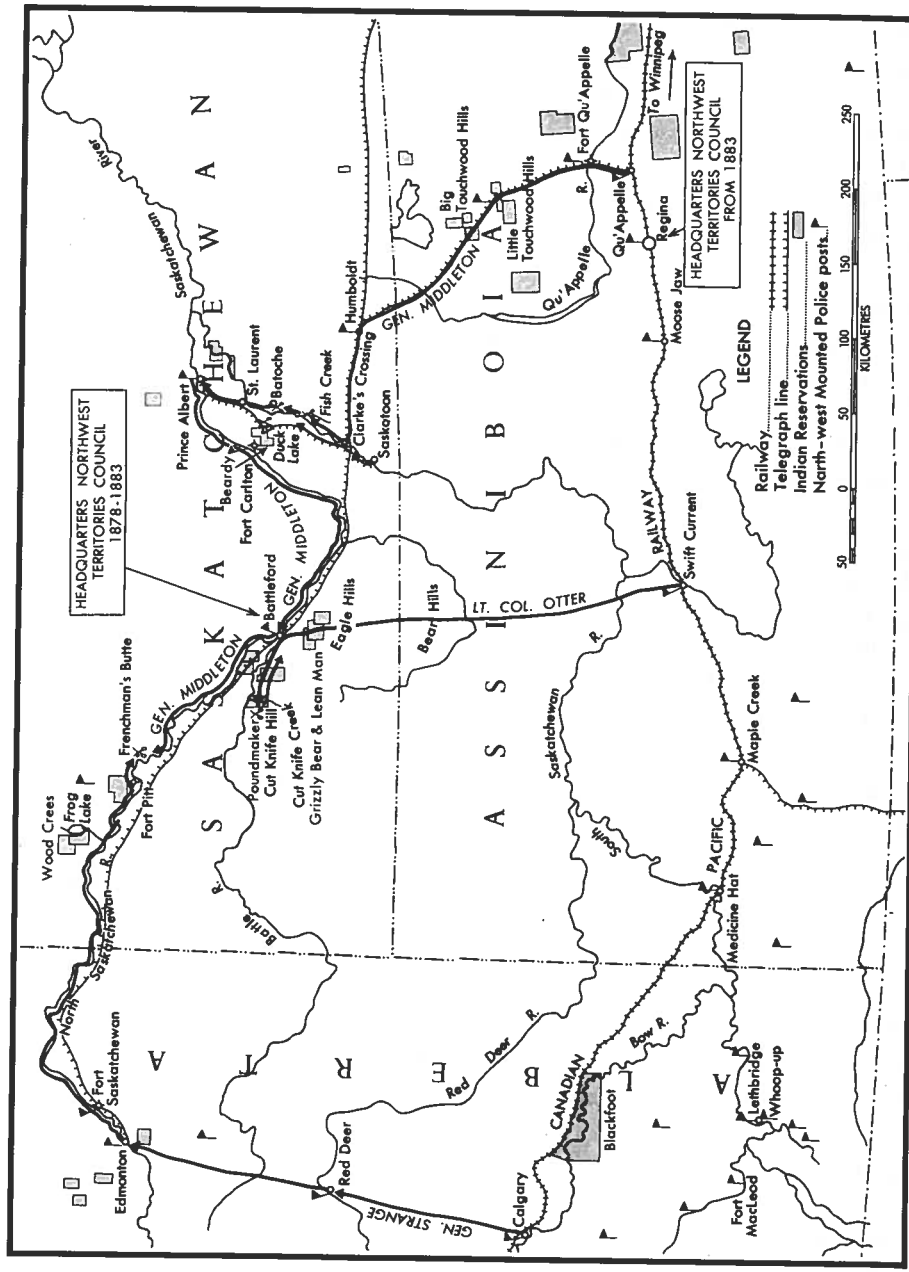
Since so many speculators had seized control of the most valuable lands along the Pine River Pass route (which had already been surveyed at government expense) the CPR syndicate, in 1881, simply made a unilateral decision to run the railway across the barren prairies of the South. There, they felt, they would be free to control both urban and rural business development according to their own needs, unencumbered by hordes of small businessmen.

At first glance, the decision to run the line through the South appeared unwise. The CPR, by pushing its rail line through the southern prairies, was forcing settlement to take place in some of the least hospitable parts of Canada. The lack of firewood and good drinking water was to make settlement difficult here for decades to come, yet the immigrant farmers had to follow the rail line and settle near it if they hoped to get their grain to the international market.

The CPR syndicate tacitly admitted that, with the exception of a few extremely fertile pockets of land like the Regina Plains, the land in the North was more suitable for agriculture. In 1882, the syndicate convinced the government to substitute much of the acreage granted to it along the southern route for land near Prince Albert and along other sections of the fertile belt, closely following the original Pine River Pass route.[30] Clearly, the CPR syndicate felt that the land along the southern route was not as valuable as the land along the northern route it had just abandoned.

Yet, for the CPR syndicate, this apparently irrational move made good business sense. The veteran American railroader James J. Hill left no doubt about why the move was made. He knew that a railway pushed through virgin territory created its own business, its own towns and cities, just as it controlled the movement and direction of the immigrant agriculturalists.[31] And since the new southern line would pass through such virgin country, the CPR could utilize its own land and urban development schemes in a most profitable manner.

Moving the proposed rail line from the North to the South had nothing to do with engineering problems, nor with the question of which route would be better for agricultural settlement on the prairies. From both perspectives it was abundantly clear that the Pine River Pass route was



From D. G. Kerr, Historical Atlas of Canada (3rd revised ed.) (Don Mills Ont: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1975) p. 59 GDI Library

the superior choice. Indeed, when the decision was made by J.J. Hill to use the southern route, new studies and expensive new surveys had to be carried out at government expense, and new mountain passes had to be explored and charted through the three mountain ranges between the southern prairies and the West Coast.

Prime Minister Macdonald and the Conservative government in Ottawa could not prevent the expensive change in plans, despite the fact that it had provided much of the capital needed for construction of the CPR through its generous grants of money, equipment and land. Thus, with one bold stroke, J.J. Hill and the CPR syndicate placed themselves in charge of Canadian economic development in the West. The move, however, negated the years of work that had gone into the planning of the northern route, the years of soil studies, the surveys, and the exploration of the northern mountain passes that often wound through natural river valleys to the coast. On the other hand, the southern passes that were eventually used by the CPR rose thousands of feet higher, leaving the railway sometimes clinging precariously to sheer precipices, as it does above the rushing Fraser River.

But if J.J. Hill's decision to move the line three hundred kilometers to the south was to prove expensive for the Canadian government, which had to explore and survey new mountain passes, it was disastrous for the colonization companies and the settlers already living in the North West along the abandoned route. Nevertheless, the federal government remained subservient to the CPR, changing its development plans accordingly. The cabinet passed an order-in-council in March, 1882, changing the capital of the North West Territories from Battleford to Regina.

The small towns along the new route began a process of economic boom during the years just prior to the rebellion, while Battleford, Prince Albert and other communities along the abandoned route sank rapidly into an economic depression. The colonization companies soon went bankrupt, since they now could not hope to attract immigrants to their tracts of land hundreds of kilometers north of the only rail line that could carry their produce to the international market. Both the owners and the settlers of the land along the abandoned route began to clamour for the construction of branch lines that would connect them to the main line of the CPR. However, these lines were not constructed until long after the rebellion of 1885, much too late for the settlers and the colonization companies.

The evidence is clear that the colonization companies failed as a direct result of the CPR's shift to the south. In all, 166,403 immigrants entered the West between 1881 and 1886. Of this number, the colonization companies brought in only 1,080, or less than 1% of the total.[32] The Prince Albert Colonization Company failed to locate one settler on its property; in fact, it was involved in attempting to drive off the Metis already living there, even though, under the terms of its contract with the government, it could have applied for, and received, payment for them from the government as settlers on its property.

The depression that settled in over the Prince Albert region affected everyone living there. But it had far-reaching national implications as well. The additional costs imposed upon the federal government, coupled with the air of scandal over the change in routes, severely taxed the economy of the young nation, and eventually destabilized the Conservative government in Ottawa.

The additional costs brought on by the shift of the CPR drained government coffers, making other necessary programs suffer or fail altogether. The aid that was going to the Plains Indians to help them in their rapid transition from buffalo hunters to farmers was severely cut back. The farm instructors who had been sent onto reserves to assist the Indians to become agriculturalists were insufficiently funded. There was not enough capital available to purchase the necessary farm implements. This created a crisis on some reserves. Having lost their only food supply when the buffalo were destroyed, the Indians suddenly had to become successful farmers or face death by starvation on their cramped reserves. The drastic cut in government expenditures for the Plains Indians' farm program ensured that the farm instructor program would fail; but even worse, it reduced the supply of emergency food rations on the reserves. It was not long before food distribution was used as a means of maintaining social control. Rebels or intransigent Indians simply did not get fed.

The starvation of some of the militant Indians was not just the result of government apathy toward their plight. It was a conscious policy designed to ensure continued social control. Farm instructors and Indian agents were directed to manipulate the distribution of food supplies as a means of preventing Indian militants from organizing larger resistance groups.[33] Hayter Reed, who was in charge of the Department of Indian Affairs in 1883, complained that the police were often going against orders

by feeding certain Indian militants. In 1883, Reed wrote Lieutenant-Governor Edgar Dewdney:

> One thing should certainly be done and it is that the Mounted Police be debarred from rationing our Indians. Indian agent Rae complains that many of his worst characters are refused by him only to go to the barracks and receive a belly full.[34]

Whereas this aspect of government policy towards certain of the militant Indian groups was clearly designed to intimidate the Plains Indians into submitting to government authority, the policy for the treatment of the Metis seemed to be that of abandonment. To make matters even worse for the destitute French Metis who had not received title to the lands they occupied along the South Saskatchewan River, their code of honour demanded that they share their meagre food supply with their Indian cousins.

In 1884, Gabriel Dumont informed Mr. Forget, the French-speaking clerk of the North West Council who had been sent north to spy on the Metis,

> The Government should not be surprised if we side with the Indians. They are our relatives, and when they are starving they come to us for relief and we have to feed them. The Government is not doing right by them. I don't know the words of the paper signed by them, but I heard the speeches and the explanations given of the Treaty [referring to Treaty Number Six], not only they would live as well as they had before, but better . . . Is that what is taking place now? Now they are allowed to go about starving and the burden of feeding them falls on us. We desire the Indians to be fed; because if they are not we will ourselves be kept in poverty.[35]

The economic depression in the North West hit the small White and English Metis farmers of the region with an equally devastating blow. As a result, protest factions emerged among these groups in the North West. Political opposition to the federal government's colonial policies in the West was centred in Prince Albert, where the regional depression was most deeply felt. In Prince Albert, two men emerged as clear and forceful leaders of this opposition: Dr. Andrew Porter and a youth named William Henry Jackson. The opposition, representing a western expression of radical liberalism, soon became known locally as "the popular movement."

Dr. Porter, the first physician in the North West Territories, was widely respected as a fundamentally honest and progressive person. Nevertheless, he belonged to that staunchly Protestant Anglo-Saxon club, the Free Masons of Prince Albert, the same club that had as members Captain Moore, J.E. Sproat, and most of the other Tory speculators and members in the Conservative's ruling clique.[36] In fact, Dr. Porter was married to the niece of Donald A. Smith, former Commissioner for the HBC and present member of the CPR syndicate. It was difficult, therefore, for Dr. Porter to convince the poor farmers and the Natives that he would be qualitatively different than his Conservative opponents. William Henry Jackson, on the other hand, was distinctively different – so much so that his constituents were often confused by his brilliant but seemingly eccentric approach to politics.

William Henry Jackson, who was to have an impact on the history of the Canadian West, was born in Toronto on May 13, 1861, to Thomas and Elizabeth Jackson, both offspring of Wesleyan Methodist ministers. Recently immigrated from England, they moved to Wingham, Ontario, when William was three years old. William was an exceptionally bright student throughout his school years, completing high school and going on to university in Toronto. His brother and sister, Thomas Eastwood and Cicely Jackson, also attended institutions of higher learning. Thomas received a degree in pharmacy while Cicely became a school teacher, but it was Will who excelled in university, finishing near the top of his class.

During his years at university, Will became a great admirer of William Lyon Mackenzie who had led the revolution for responsible government in Upper Canada. But this was a natural progression for a young man whose father had taught that "the citizen had a God-given right to rise up in the face of oppression."[37] Will had attended his first political meeting with his father at the tender age of eleven.

In the late 1870s a fire ruined his father's business in Wingham, and in 1879 the family moved to Prince Albert, leaving Will in Toronto to complete his degree. Thomas Eastwood Jackson opened a drug store in Prince Albert and the family settled down permanently. Unable to support himself further in university, Will left Toronto in 1880 and joined the family in Prince Albert. Here, Will soon became involved in the push for responsible government in the West by joining the Liberal Party under the leadership of Dr. Porter. As well, he became involved in the Farmers' Union where, as a small farmer and a highly educated man, he was elected secretary at age 19.

Will Jackson combined practical abilities as an organizer with a romantic nature; it may have been that combination that made him a life-long crusader for progressive social change. Unlike some of his educated peers, Will held no racist concepts. He belonged to a school of thought that concerned itself with revolutionary social change and rejected the popular ideology that placed Anglo-Saxons above the other peoples of the world.

Shortly after his arrival in Prince Albert, Will met and fell in love with Angele Ouellette, daughter of Moise Ouellette. Although the bitter struggle that was soon to come between the Metis and the government ended the young couple's romance, this love affair may have been one of the reasons why Will remained loyal to the Metis throughout the difficult and dangerous years of turmoil and rebellion that were to follow.

Unlike the uneducated settlers of the North, or the Metis or Indians, each involved in a narrow form of resistance based largely on ethnic grouping, Jackson understood the full implications of the federal government's national policy and its negative effects upon all the people of the West. Therefore he strove to unite these forces. By the early summer of 1883, he was attempting to convince the White settlers that they should widen their resistance movement to include the Indians and Metis. However, none of the groups he hoped to unite could understand this broader approach to their various grievances with the federal government.

Although Dr. Porter and Will Jackson presented a genuine platform of reform that could benefit all ethnic groups during the election for the District of Lorne in 1883, they did not get a majority of votes from either the Metis or the poor White farmers.

There were reasons for this that Jackson could not control. Father André, a member of the Conservative clique and a supporter of Lawrence Clarke, felt that it was in the best interests of the Metis to support the powerful Conservatives in the hope that they would reciprocate by supporting the Metis in their demand for land title. The Conservative candidate, D.H. MacDowall, ran against Dr. Porter in the election of 1883. It was an uneven race because of André's support for the Conservative Party.

Political candidates seeking the large, critical block of Metis voters came cap in hand to Father André, who controlled his flock with the threat of eternal damnation for those who voted contrary to his wishes.[38] Under the direction of Father André, the Metis supported the Clarke-MacDowall alliance in the critical election of 1883, thus ending the reform

group's hopes of achieving their ends through parliamentary means. André gave his support to the Conservative clique in 1883 even though many of its members had recently been involved in a serious political scandal involving government contracts, a scandal that had almost led to armed rebellion in Prince Albert.[39]

Father André, because of his conservative world view, consistently supported the representatives of the upper classes. Father André wrote about his feelings regarding the Conservative victory of 1883:

> The elections this year took place in March. Two candidates stood, Mr. MacDowall, representing the Bourgeoisie and Doctor Porter for the lower classes and the Free Masons . . . But thanks to Catholic support the candidate for the Bourgeoisie has been elected and to recompense his Metis voters he gave $100 for the erection of the church of Saint Antoine.[40]

Thus Father André led the Metis to support their political enemies, while Dr. Porter and William Jackson, presenting a genuine platform of reform that included the Metis,[41] were rejected at the polls. This unfortunate circumstance was eventually to spell disaster for both the Metis and the young radical, Will Jackson.

There is no question that these Conservative candidates supported government policies designed to evict the Metis from the lands they occupied. This was made clear in a letter from Lieutenant Governor Dewdney to Sir John A. Macdonald in which Dewdney admitted that government plans to settle Metis land claims would do absolutely nothing for most of the Metis of the district.[42]

The Liberal reform group fully understood the federal government's system of structured regional disparity contained in the national policy. They knew that the policy was designed to exploit western farmers through a system of high tariffs, and again in the marketplace, where the cost of their produce would be determined, not by the farmers themselves, but by the grain marketing network. In this way the eastern merchants and industrialists could obtain sufficient capital to launch Canada into its own belated industrial revolution. They knew that the only hope for the people of the North West Territories lay in the creation of a provincial government within the framework of Confederation. Because of their failure to attract the Metis to their cause, however, the Popular Movement never achieved political office. Nevertheless, during the political campaign

of 1883, the flamboyant William Henry Jackson became a well-known public figure. Never a man to mince words, Jackson summed up the people's struggle at a political meeting in Prince Albert: "This issue is plain and simple, the people's rights against monopolies, cliques, rings and clap legislation."[43]

When the Popular Movement failed to win a seat on the North West Council in 1883, its members attempted to educate people through the creation of non-political bodies. In particular, they hoped to focus opposition to government policy by organizing the Farmers' Union. Jackson hoped that the Farmers' Union would have the capacity, as a non-political vehicle, to bring together the disparate elements and ethnic groups within the region: the French Metis, the poor European farmers and the English Metis. In fact, he hoped that the Farmers' Union would mold these groups into an effective political force that would eventually provide a strong opposition to the Conservative party. The long-term goal of the Farmers' Union was the same as that of the Popular Movement — to establish local responsible government through the creation of a new province.[44]

Like the Liberal reform group, the Farmers' Union voiced its dissent in printed material that was distributed to those farmers who could read. Through this medium they complained about the federal government's land and railway monopolies that worked for eastern interests, the high tariffs, the granting of land to favoured individuals for less than its intrinsic value, and the handing out of secret development information to political favourites.[45]

Although the Farmers' Union acquired only a small membership, the group was quite clearly a threat to the Conservative machine because of the incisive analysis William Henry Jackson applied to the political situation. Jackson was an excellent public speaker. As well, he published a small underground political journal called ***The Voice of The People,*** which was circulated for a brief period in Prince Albert.[46] Jackson intended to unite the people of the North West against the policies of the federal government, but he wanted to do more as well. He was a man with a vision of a new society where ancient prejudices and class divisions had no place. He was therefore especially dangerous to the group of Conservatives who still maintained power over the region.

At times the Popular Movement seemed to be reaching its desired constituency through ***The Voice of The People.*** In the paper Jackson outlined plans to start an agricultural marketing cooperative through the

Farmers' Union. He wanted millers and merchants to be excluded from membership in the union because their occupations, he felt, placed them in opposition to the farmers. Jackson warned the members of the organization that Clarke and Sproat would attempt to co-opt them. He wrote:

> When the mention was made of an agricultural society it was rumoured that Messrs. L. Clarke and Sproat were taking an interest in it, and that it was being organized in the Red Deer Hill district by Mr. Charles Adams, an intimate friend of L. Clarke and a late employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. These circumstances caused three things to appear to me not impossible. (1) That the society might be hampered by the admission of millers and merchants as members. (2) That politics might be introduced indirectly by an attempt to make the membership adopt and endorse certain disputed political questions. (3) That politics might be introduced directly by an attempt to confer the secretaryship to some tool or member of the political faction to which the above mentioned men belong, and through the medium summon a quorum of the faithful to endow their candidate with the prestige of nomination by the agricultural society.[47]

It was not long before Jackson's warnings were proven correct. Lawrence Clarke managed to manipulate the members of the Farmers' Union into allowing him and his entourage of merchants, millers and businessmen to take over their organization. Jackson rose at a meeting that was flooded with Clarke's supporters and beseeched the farmers not to allow these politicians and businessmen, whose interests conflicted with their own, to become members of the Farmer's Union.

Lawrence Clarke, who had just donated $100 to the organization, responded to Jackson's speech by reminding the farmers of Jackson's youth and inexperience. As a consequence, the newcomers were allowed to become members, while young Jackson was refused permission to speak again at the meeting. Clarke and Sproat then demanded that all the people present pay one dollar to retain their memberships. A motion supporting this demand was passed by Clarke's followers. Since many of the farmers were poor and could not produce a dollar, they immediately lost their membership in their own organization. Jackson reported: "The books were opened for the enrollment of members and outsiders of all sorts, mill owners, merchants, real estate agents and lawyers tabled their

dollars and enrolled themselves as honest grangers, horny handed sons of toil."[48] Clarke's guile and prestige overwhelmed the ignorant farmers; they were cajoled into electing him and his friends to directorships in their own organization. To top it off, Lawrence Clarke was granted a lifetime membership in the Farmers' Union.

After the meeting was over, William Henry Jackson was actually evicted from the Farmers' Union, which was now composed mainly of mill owners, merchants, real estate people and businessmen. The uneducated rank-and-file members of the union were no match for the clever members of the Conservative clique. Young William Henry Jackson must have been seen as something of an eccentric or a radical by the simple folk of the district. The power and prestige of Clarke's cohort, together with Clarke's smooth tongue and generous gifts of cash, proved to be a winning combination against the underground organization of the Popular Movement. Through these devices, Lawrence Clarke, with the help of Father André, ensured that the Liberals would fail to achieve popular recognition either through the electoral process or the Farmers' Union.

However, the discontent that had engendered both the Popular Movement and the Farmers' Union did not, as Clarke had planned, disappear. It simply went further underground. Although Clarke, André, and the Conservative party had the local political situation well in hand, neither Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney nor Prime Minister Macdonald was unaware of the potential for organized resistance in the North West. William Henry Jackson was kept under police surveillance betweem 1883 and 1885, as were emerging Metis leaders.[49]

The federal Conservatives knew that regional dissatisfaction with Ottawa's policies ran deep. Police surveillance was therefore stepped up in the North West during 1884, when all the legitimate means of dissent for both the Metis and the radical farmers had been blocked by Clarke and his allies. But Jackson's efforts to unite these two oppressed groups had not been altogether unproductive. Having failed to win concessions for either of the groups, Jackson and some of his allies began discussions with the French Metis who were agitating to bring Louis Riel back from Montana to act as their spokesman with the federal government.

The Metis and the leaders of the Popular Movement drew up a letter at the Lindsay District school on May 6, 1884, to be delivered to Riel in Montana. The letter, asking Riel to return to the North West, indicated that an alliance was developing between the English-speaking farmers

of the region and the French Metis, who were also attempting to involve the Indians. The people at the meeting felt that the only thing required to bring this union about was the presence of Louis Riel. The letter concluded: "Now, my dear cousin, the closest union exists between the French and English and the Indians, and we have good Generals to foster it . . . The whole race is calling for you."[50]

Lawrence Clarke, whose agents also attended this meeting, reported to the Department of the Interior:

> Dear Sir, — The French Metis on the Saskatchewan River, and a section of English [Metis] living between the two rivers, have been holding meetings at St. Laurent, at which meetings all the members were sworn to secrecy. Notwithstanding this, enough has transpired to show that grave trouble will arise in the country unless repressive measures are adopted by the Government.
>
> A number of resolutions were passed of a violent nature. Amongst others, resolution No. 3: "That they, the [Metis], do not recognize the right of the Government to the North-West Territories," and appointed delegates to proceed to Montana, U.S.A., and invite Louis Riel to come over and be their leader in any further action they may determine on.[51]

As a result of this meeting of the Metis and farmers at the Lindsay schoolhouse, Gabriel Dumont, Moise Ouellette, Michel Dumas and James Isbister left for Montana, hoping to bring Riel back to act as their spokesman with the federal government.

When the Metis delegation arrived in Montana they found their old leader living a peaceful life as a school teacher and father. Nevertheless, Riel responded warmly to their request to return to the North West. Riel's purpose in returning was clear and unambiguous. His plan was to negotiate with the Canadian federal government peacefully, through petitions and diplomacy. The delegation reported back to the constituents of the Popular Movement:

> Mr. Riel comes to help us without pretentions. He hopes that before long the Northwest will be quite united and that the Government will see its way to do whatever is right towards every class of our people . . . [Louis Riel's] conversation inspires us with the great confidence, as his intentions are to help us, but if we understand him well he will help us without any wish on his part to embarrass the Government.[52]

Riel left a written response to the delegates' request for his return to the North West, in which he outlined all the reasons for his affirmative response. Because it makes clear the fact that his intentions were both honourable and peaceful, it is quoted here at length. In his letter, Riel argued that as a property owner with his own claims against the Canadian government, he had a legal right to return and to represent the Metis people in Canada:

> St. Peter's Mission 5th June, 1884.
>
> To Messrs. James Isbister, Gabriel Dumont, Moise Ouelette and Michael Dumas.
>
> Gentlemen, — You have travelled more than 400 miles from the Sakatchewan country across the international line, to make me a visit. The communities in the midst of which you live have sent you as their delegates to ask my advice on various difficulties which have rendered the British North-West as yet unhappy under the Ottawa Government. Moreover, you write me to go and stay amongst you, your hope being that I for one could help to better in some respects your condition. Cordial and pressing is your invitation. You want me and my family to accompany you. I am at liberty to excuse myself and say no. Yet, you are waiting for me, so that I have only to get ready, and your letters of delegation give me the assurance that a family welcome awaits me in the midst of those who have sent you. Gentlemen, your personal visit does me honor and causes great pleasure, but on account of its representative character, your coming to me has the proportions of a remarkable fact; I record it as one of the gratifications of my life. It is a good event, which my family will remember, and I pray to God that your delegation may become a blessing amongst the blessings of this my fortieth year.
>
> To be frank is the shortest. I doubt whether my advice given to you on this soil concerning affairs on Canadian territory could cross the border and retain any influence. But here is another view. The Canadian Government owe me two hundred and forty acres of land according to the thirty-first clause of the Manitoba treaty. They owe me also, five lots, valuable on account of hay, timber and river frontage. Those lots were mine according to the different paragraphs of the same thirty-first clause of the above-mentioned Manitoba treaty. It is the Canadian Government which have deprived me, directly or

indirectly, of those properties. Besides if they only pay attention to it a minute, they will easily find out that they owe me something else.

Those of my claims against them are such as to hold good, notwithstanding the fact that I have become an American citizen. Considering then your interest and mine, I accept your very kind invitation. I will go and spend some time amongst you. By petitioning the Government with you, perhaps we will all have the good fortune of obtaining something. But my intention is to come back early this fall.

Montana has a pretty numerous native half-breed element. If we count with them the white men interested in the half-breed welfare, by being themselves heads of half-breed families or related to them in any other way, I believe it safe to assert that the half-breed element of Montana is a pretty strong one. I am just getting acquainted with that element. I am one of those who would like to unite and direct its vote so as to make it profitable to themselves and useful to their friends. Moreover, I have made acquaintances and friends, amongst whom I like to live. I start with you but I intend to come back here some time in September.

I have the honor, gentlemen delegated to me, to be your humble servant,

LOUIS RIEL[53]

Clearly, Riel's intentions were peaceful when he returned with the delegates to the North West in the summer of 1884. He intended to negotiate with the federal government on behalf of the people, then return home to Montana in September.

On their arrival at St. Laurent the Riel family and the delegation that brought them back were greeted with an enthusiastic and emotional Metis welcome. But the federal government was kept aware of Riel's movements after his return. When Mr. Forget, the French-Canadian clerk of the North West Council, was sent north to see what the Metis planned to do, Gabriel Dumont, who thought Forget was a friend of the Metis because of his French-Canadian background, told him:

> The Government has not treated us as we are entitled. They have ignored our rights and looked down upon us with contempt. Seeing that, and not having any one among us capable of speaking and writing for us, we went for Mr. Riel and brought him here. Mr. Riel is now with us, and it is our

duty to see to his personal safety. We need him here as our political leader. In other matters I am the chief here.[54]

In the weeks that followed Riel's return, government agents reported that he was exerting a moderating influence on the troubled region. However, it was noted that his moderation and his persuasive charisma attracted both Native and White people to the Popular Movement. Still, his presence did have a calming effect, particularly among the Metis and the Indians, because he gave them hope that their rights could be obtained without a violent confrontation with the Canadian government. Even Father André, whose position as the ultimate moral authority over the Metis stood to be eclipsed by Riel's return, was disposed to praise Riel's diplomacy and moderation.

Following Riel's eloquent speech at a public meeting in Prince Albert, Father André wrote Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney, giving him all the details of Riel's impact on the North West. Since this document clearly shows that Riel's intentions were both peaceful and rational, it is quoted here at length:

> — Since my last letter to your Honor nothing has happened to disturb my belief that Riel, in coming to this country, has not any bad design in view. He has acted and spoken in a quiet and sensible way every time he has had the opportunity of appearing before the public, and no one can point out any act or word of his which is liable to create any disturbance in the country. All his endeavors so far as I know, are to make the people understand that in answering to their call he has in view no other object than to help them by legitimate and peaceful means . . . He is able to assure his countrymen, the [Metis], they are better off on this side of the line, and does not wish them to become Americans. He has passed through a hard school in which he has learned a good many useful lessons, and the one he sets to heart is to remain quiet and to work for his fellow countrymen by open and fair ways. Everywhere Riel goes he is creating the most favorable impressions in his favor, and with the exception of ten or twelve prejudiced persons he seems to be very popular, not only amongst the French, but also among the English population. Five or six persons here at Prince Albert who think themselves superior to other men, and think they have the right by birth (and you may be sure the Royal Prince [a sarcastic reference

to Lawrence Clarke] is one of them) to lead the people, have been greatly offended because a great number of citizens at Prince Albert sent to Riel a petition asking him to come down and address them at a public meeting, every misfortune, murder, bloodshed, were sure to be the result if Riel was mad enough to come down; that was the prospect put before us during all last week, by those prophets de malheur, but they were greatly disappointed in their expectations. Riel came down last Saturday, and he received a really hearty and enthusiastic welcome from the people of Prince Albert. The meeting went out quietly, only one man tried to raise a row, and he was put out quickly. There was a mass meeting, such as Prince Albert has never seen; people came from the country to meet Mr. Riel, from everywhere, and they went back struck with the quiet and gentle way he spoke to them. I enclose here a summary of his speech. The enthusiastic welcome which Riel received at Prince Albert, I account on one hand by that feeling of mere curiousity of the people to see and to hear a man whose name has been before the public for so long a time, and who held so large a place in the history of the country, and on the other hand, by the wish to defeat the intrigues of a certain clique of men here at Prince Albert, who have tried so much to stop Riel from coming to Prince Albert. To-day those men have failed, and have seen their expectation to see a riot fall down, and they are greatly disappointed and will try to represent things under a black cloud, not according to real facts, but according to their imagination; they will try to distort the simplest things, and will represent Riel as bound to disturb the peace of the country; but, Governor, as an honest man, I tell you the country is quiet, and as far as I can see, Riel has no other purpose than to help the people in their difficulties. He strongly advocates peace and union among all the several sections of the country. I have not heard a hard word fall from his mouth. What are his purposes? They are a good many and require a long time if he wanted to see them carried out. 1st. He wants the [Metis] to have a free grant to the land they occupy; he wants to agitate to have the three districts of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Assiniboia erected into Provinces, or at least to have each district represented in Parliament; he wants the land laws amended to suit more the rapid settlement of the country. These, as far as I remember, are the leading points to which he addressed the people of Prince Albert last

Saturday. I went to hear him and I may say that he speaks well and eloquently, he speaks fluently English and his expressions are just and correct. He created a great sensation and was immensely applauded all through his long address, and his opponents are obliged to credit him with much talent and a clever way to bring the people over to him. I could not help admiring him to see how, situated as he was, he overcomes all the difficulties which surround him and draws the sympathies of the assembly towards him. What will be the end of all this? The end will be that we will have for a time plenty talk, plenty meeting, plenty petitions, and after a time the excitement will get over and we will become calm as usual, and Riel who is our wonder to-day, will become a common mortal for us, and we will be as much advanced as we are to-day, and these great reforms will become stale things, and the big men will go down. That, sir, is my impression of the present state of things. We wanted something to occupy us for a while talking about him, and put an end to the talk about the crops and the poor prospect before us to have a good one.

Now, as far as my opinion is worth anything, I advise strongly (sic) not Government to interfere with Riel as long as he keeps quiet. I cannot hide from you that his influence for good or evil is great among the [Metis], French as well as English; he has a great many admirers even among the white population, and the Indians in the North-West will remain quiet as long as the [Metis] will not set a bad example to them. They all look on Riel as their leader, and the Government ought to act wisely not to create an outbreak by any rash act of theirs. I am convinced there is not any danger of disturbance. The arrival of Riel has acted as a calm on all the agitated minds, and all his words are to advocate peace and good feelings among all the people in the country. I write you what I think right. I have no purpose in view but to see our people quiet and satisfied, and keep you informed how things are going on among us. I have seen Riel three or four times, and so far have nothing but good to say of him. To see him and to converse with him leaves no doubt in anybody's mind he is gentle and modest in expressing his views, and he is far from being bitter against the Government. In his public utterances I did not hear Riel speak contemptuously of anybody in disapproving things, he is always respectful towards persons in authority, and he shows really himself a perfect gentleman, whatever to the

contrary some notorious persons may say.

My letter is already long enough, but it is not very soon, Governor, I will afflict you with the penance of reading another.

With all my best wishes for you, I remain your obedient and respectful servant.

A. ANDRÉ.[55]

In this letter André referred to the "intrigues of a certain clique of men" in Prince Albert. This is not the only reference made by André to the surreptitious activities of Lawrence Clarke and his associates.

In the following document, André warned Lieutenant Governor Dewdney that this "certain clique" in Prince Albert would be passing on false information to the government in the hope that the government would act rashly to send in troops or police, thus creating a boom that would bring a degree of prosperity back to the faltering business of the district. Clearly, André knew that these business people were involved in an intrigue of some sort that was designed to scare the government into taking military action against Riel and the Metis, who, according to André, were acting in a legal and peaceful manner. André wrote Dewdney:

You will receive alarming reports about the danger in which the country is in consequence of Riel's arrival. Do not believe a word. Those persons will be very glad that you should commit some rash act. They will send and advise you to have Riel arrested. For God's sake, never commit such an act before you have good motives to justify such an act. A good many persons will urge you to send here 200 or 300 policemen. They will be glad to see Government go to expenses, because that will be so much money put in their pockets. Nothing so far requires to send one man more to keep the peace of the country. The [Metis], English as well as French, understand too well the foolishness and the consequences of rising in a rebellion against the Government, and Riel seems really to act by good motives and to have no bad design. A man will not bring his wife and children along with him if he intended to raise a rebellion, and Mr. Riel has brought his wife and two little children with him, and that is the best proof that he has no bad intentions.

I write to you in earnest and tell you my sanguine conviction there is no danger of any trouble if you let quiet Mr. Riel, but if you or any official interferes with him or try to have him

> arrested there is almost a certainty of trouble, and [Metis] and Indians will join together; so, as long as Mr. Riel conducts himself quietly why trouble him and rouse the anger of the people? Excuse, Governor, my writing. I write in a great hurry, but I hope you will be able to make out what I mean. I will rather be long and tedious than miss to tell you something that is important for you to know. If you want to know something particularly I will be ready always to oblige your Honor and to send you full details.
>
> With my best wishes, I remain, Sir, your humble servant.
> FATHER ANDRÉ.[56]

The importance of this communication between Father André and Lieutenant Governor Dewdney is self-evident. Clearly, André was implying that certain people in Prince Albert were attempting to provoke a conflict with the Metis. As will be seen, the unidentified persons referred to here were none other than Lawrence Clarke and the clique of Conservative speculators in Prince Albert.

Father André was not the only authority in the Prince Albert district who reported that a particular group in Prince Albert were seeking a war against the Metis in order to bring prosperity back to the region. Major L.N.F. Crozier, a proud and honest police officer, was also aware that the local speculators who comprised the leadership of the Conservative Party in Prince Albert were scheming to create a conflict with Riel. Major Crozier wrote to Dewdney,

> For, granting that [Riel's] power to make serious trouble may be but problematical, yet his very presence here causes a feeling of uneasiness among the [Metis] and Indians, which as you know, is taken advantage of by others who are neither Metis nor Indians, to further their own scheming ends.[57]

There is no doubt that Father André, Major Crozier, and Lieutenant Governor Dewdney knew who the members of the mysterious clique were. Indeed, Dewdney had identified the leaders of this group to Prime Minister Macdonald, so there can be no doubt that government officials from the Prime Minister down knew of the plot to create trouble in the North West by using Riel as a scapegoat. Dewdney wrote to Prime Minister Macdonald, identifying Lawrence Clarke as the central figure in this plot:

> The fact is the Hudson's Bay Company required some

> freighting to be done and he [Clarke] cut down the rates below the recognized prices and the [Metis] became hostile towards him. At Prince Albert there is a certain clique which would like nothing better than to see a row so that money might be brought among them . . . Subsequently to Clarke's telegram to me he evidently became alarmed and I hear he wrote a very sensational letter to Mr. Graham, at the same time asking Colonel Sproat to write you.[58]

The letter that Clarke wrote to Graham, referred to here by Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney, was used by Prime Minister Macdonald on March 29, 1886, *after* the war of 1885, to justify the use of troops in putting down the Metis.[59] (see Appendix D)

In fact, corruption and scandal involving the Clarke clique and the federal government was commonplace, and was acknowledged by the townspeople of Prince Albert following the telegraph scandal of 1882. It was also well known by both government officials and many citizens of Prince Albert that Clarke's group wished to provoke a war between the Metis and federal government.

During the political debates that took place in the spring of 1884 concerning Riel's return, Clarke was playing a dual role. Even as Clarke was advising members of the government to arrest Riel upon his return to the North West, he had been actively, though surreptitiously, supporting the movement for his return. Clarke evidently hoped that if Riel could be brought back to the country he could be used as a scapegoat so that the Conservative clique could agitate for the war they so desperately needed to save their own business investments in the region.

There are two remaining written accounts which point toward Clarke's involvement in bringing Riel back from Montana. In the first account, Clarke is not named. The writer merely states that "a very prominent person" gave one of the delegates who went for Riel his written permission to do so. The writer suggests that this delegate suspects that some treachery was involved on the part of this very prominent person and insisted, therefore, on a written (rather than "sub rosa") directive:

> As Ottawa appeared unmoved by all these declamations, the thoughts of all turned to Riel. It was resolved to ask him to come to Saskatchewan and give them the advantage of his weight and experience. This scheme, if it did not originate with the white people, at least had their secret approval. One of those delegates to visit Riel in his Montana home — he was a Scotch

> Halfbreed, J. Isbister, an old Hudson's Bay man — not satisfied with sub rosa backing — Would not leave till he had obtained from a very prominent person, a letter giving some sort of authorization for the mission.[60]

Further evidence indicated that Lawrence Clarke was the man identified as the "prominent person" who visited with J. Isbister:

> The tradition persists that Lawrence Clarke was an active sympathizer with the early stages of the rebellion. The matter was discussed in the press in May 1885. Isbister said that he went straight from the meeting which decided to call Riel, to Lawrence Clarke, and that Clarke had said that there will have to be a rebellion. Clarke later admitted the visit but claimed that he had turned Isbister out of his office with indignation at his design to bring Riel in.[61]

Clarke was playing one side against the other. Even as he advised the Prime Minister and the Lieutenant Governor that a Metis insurrection was brewing, he went about the country quietly supporting Riel's return to the North West, hoping that Riel could be used to stir up the Metis and provoke them into an armed conflict with federal forces. There is further evidence of Clarke's involvement.

Shortly after his arrival in St. Laurent, Riel was invited to dinner with William Jackson at the Jackson home in Prince Albert. During the meal an unexpected caller arrived at the door. Lawrence Clarke, the avowed opponent of the Popular Movement and of Louis Riel, entered with a twenty dollar donation for Riel. He greeted his surprised hosts with, "How is the movement coming on? Here is $20. for Riel's keep. Bring on your rebellion as soon as you can. It will be the making of this country."[62]

Clarke's provocations eventually paid off. In the summer of 1884 the police increased the strength of the northern division by two hundred men. The new arrivals were quartered in Fort Carlton, the HBC post supervised by Lawrence Clarke.[63]

During the fall of 1884, rumours began to spread through the Metis communities that the police were going to attempt to take Riel by force. These rumours resulted in a renewed militance among the Metis. Added to the difficult conditions under which the Metis lived, these rumours acted as a catalyst for militant organization. This increased militance began to drive some of the more moderate English Metis and European people away from the Popular Movement. In the face of Ottawa's

continued silence regarding recent Metis petitions, the increased police activity in the region took on an ominous implication. As rumours of imminent arrests circulated throughout the Metis communities, the Metis people slowly came to the realization that a military campaign was being planned against them. Yet they could not see the logic behind such plans, as they had remained passive despite their ill treatment at the hands of the government.

At a Metis political meeting at St. Laurent on December 23, 1884, a rumour spread through the crowd that the police were going to break up the gathering and arrest Riel. Sergeant Gagnon of the NWMP reported that it took less than half an hour after the rumour was circulated for the Metis to gather over one hundred armed men for Riel's protection. After this incident the police knew that any attempt to take Riel by force would result in an armed confrontation with the Metis.[64] As a result of recurring rumours concerning Riel's arrest, coupled with the negative police reaction to the political meetings, the Metis movement for responsible government began to develop a more military stance.

Riel and his followers had little to celebrate as the year 1884 came to a close. Riel began to realize that Ottawa would never enter into serious negotiations with him concerning either Metis land claims or responsible government in the North West. Consequently, he began to focus his activities around the Bill of Rights, a document drawn up to convince the federal government that the North West Territories should be made into a province.

If federal authorities accepted the document, Metis rights would be ensured along with those of the other citizens of the proposed new province. This Bill of Rights was essentially the work of William Henry Jackson. It did, however, have the blessing and full support of Riel and Dumont. Nearly all of Riel's peaceful agitation now focussed around the drive to have the Bill of Rights adopted locally and presented formally to the federal government in Ottawa.

This Bill of Rights has become a mysterious document. It lay buried for years in the dark recesses of the Department of the Interior. The source quoted below is the only public printing that could be found in Saskatchewan of this very important document. It spells out precisely what Riel and Jackson wanted from the federal government. It is, therefore, quoted in its entirety here, along with this covering letter from Jackson:

To the Honorable J.A. Chapleau,
Secretary of State for the Governor of Canada.

Sir,

I have the honor to transmit to you herewith for the consideration of His Excellency in Council a copy of the petition which the people of this District have decided to forward under present circumstances.

From your knowledge of the matter referred to, you will perceive that the petition is an extremely moderate one. I may say in fact that to the Canadian and English wing of the movement a more searching exposition of the situation would have been much more satisfactory. The opinion has been freely expressed that our appeal should be directed to the Privy Council of England and to the general public rather than to the federal authorities, on the ground not only that our previous petitions would appear to have gone astray but that even the benefit of federal representation might be largely neutralized by the placing of obstacles in the way of our choice of leaders or the disregard of those leaders . . . [Jackson's original covering letter was transcribed in Ottawa, and the copyist found the next line illegible].

It is therefore to be hoped that His Excellency and Advisers will not fail to appreciate the attitude which our people have adopted on the assurances of the now resident councillors and that a speedy and satisfactory response will be accorded to our present appeal.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
W.H. Jackson.

District of Lorne,
Grandin P.O.
St. Laurent, N.W.T.
Dec. 16, 1884.
Secretary General Committee

* * * * *

The 1885 Bill of Rights

To His Excellency the Governor General of Canada, in Council.

We, the undersigned, your humble petitioners, would respectfully submit to Your Excellency in Council, the following as our grievances:

1. that the Indians are so reduced that the settlers in many localities are compelled to furnish them with food, partly to prevent them from dying at their door, partly to preserve the peace of the Territory;
2. that the [Metis] of the Territory have not received 240 acres of land, each, as did the Manitoba Half-breeds;
3. that the [Metis] who are in possession of tracts of land have not received patents therefor;
4. that the old settlers of the N.W.T. have not received the same treatment as the old settlers of Manitoba;
5. that the claims of settlers on odd numbers, prior to survey, and on reserves, prior to the proclamation of such reserves, are not recognized;
6. that settlers on cancelled claims are limited to eighty acres Homestead and eighty acres of pre-emption;
7. that settlers are charged more than one dollar per acre for their pre-emptions;
8. that settlers are charged dues on timber, rails and firewood required for home use;
9. that customs duties are levied on the necessaries of life;
10. that settlers are not allowed to perform the required amount of breaking and cropping on their pre-emption, in lieu of their Homestead, when, as frequently happens in the vicinity of wooded streams, it is convenient to have farm buildings and grain fields on separate quarter sections;
11. that purchasers of claims from bona fide settlers who have not completed the required time of actual residence, do not get credit for the term of actual residence, by sellers;

12. that contracts for public works and supplies are not let in such a manner as to confer upon North West producers as large a benefit as they might derive therefrom, consistent with efficiency;
13. that the public buildings are often erected on sites little conducive to the economical transaction of public business;
14. that no effective measures have yet been taken to put the people of the North West in direct communication with the European Markets, via Hudson Bay;
15. that settlers are exposed to coercion at elections, owing to the fact that votes are not taken by ballot;
16. that while your petitioners wish to give the eastern government every credit for the excellent liquor regulations which obtain in the N.W.T. yet they must express their anxiety, lest those beneficial restrictions should be loosed, more especially as the country is sparsely settled and the Indians numerous and dissatified;
17. that they may humbly state their case, without intending to intermeddle with the affairs of Manitoba and other parts of the N.W.T. your petitioners respectfully submit:
    (a) that in 1870, when, on invitation of the Dominion, the Delegates of the N.W. arrived in Ottawa, claiming the control of its resources as one of the conditions of the entry of the Territory into Confederation, they were arrested;
    (b) that after releasing those Delegates, at the interposition of the Imperial authorities, after explicitly acknowledging and receiving them, "as the Delegates of the North West" the Dominion treated with them amid preparations for war; and dispatched to the Northwest an expedition of federal troops while the negotiations were pending;
    (c) that a Commissioner of the then Governor General and of His Government having averted the conflict which he saw would be the consequence of these hostilities, by giving his word of honor as commissioner that

however threatening the outlook of the situation might appear, Canada would act in good faith, the response to that peace preserving act was repudiation;

(d) that an understanding having thus arrived at with the Delegates, subject to the consent of the North West, the order-in-council by which the Queen annexed the North West Territory and Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada bears date 23d June 1870, at which time that consent had not been obtained;

(e) that having thus dispensed with one of the most important conditions of the "Union" the imperial government seems to have followed, ever since, a policy calculated, in the opinion of your humble petitioners, to make of the North West a mere appendage to Canada;

(f) that through the existence of the above-mentioned word of honor an extraordinary treaty has been established, four years after, by special inquest of the House of Commons of Canada, supported, another year later, by the government and recorded in the most conclusive official documents, there are nevertheless, today, in that part of the N.W. called Manitoba extant proof of their continual violation;

(g) that although, by the last clause of the "Manitoba act" Rupert's Land and the North West Territories were to have been under temporary government until the 1st of January 1871 and until the end of the session then next succeeding, those Territories are nevertheless, today, under a government, which has remained temporary for fifteen years and which, by the nature of its constitution is destined to remain temporary for an indefinite period;

(h) that the N.W.T. although having a population of 60,000, are not yet granted responsible government, as was Manitoba, when she had less than 12,000 of a population;

(i) that the N.W.T. and its Premier Province [the District of Saskatchewan] are not yet represented in the Cabinet, as are the Eastern Provinces;

(j) that the North West is not allowed the administration of its resources as are the eastern Provinces and British Columbia.

In submitting this as a fundamental grievance, your petitioners would disclaim any intention of defrauding the Federal Government of the Monies which they may have contributed to the improvement of the N.W.

In Conclusion, your petitioners would respectfully state that they are treated neither according to their privileges as British subjects nor according to the rights of people and that consequently as long as they are retained in those circumstances, they can be neither prosperous nor happy;

Your humble petitioners are of the opinion that the shortest and most effectual methods of remedying these grievances would be to grant the N.W.T. responsible government with control of its own resources and just representation in the Federal Parliament and Cabinet.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your excellency in Council would be pleased to cause the introduction, at the coming session of Parliament, for a measure providing for the complete organization of the District of Saskatchewan as a province, and that they be allowed as in 1870, to send Delegates to Ottawa with their Bill of Rights; whereby an understanding may be arrived at as to their entry into confederation, with the constitution of a free province, And your humble Petitioners will not cease to pray.[65]

Clearly, this document was moderate in tone, and was asking only for responsible government through provincial status within the framework of confederation. It was not, therefore, a revolutionary approach, but rather a moderate gesture asking only for the same rights enjoyed by Canadian citizens elsewhere. The Bill of Rights, drawn up on December 16, 1884, was formally acknowledged by Henry J. Morgan, Acting Under Secretary of State, on January 9, 1885. Below is a copy of the memorandum sent to William Henry Jackson:

Department of State
Ottawa, Jan. 5th, 1885

To
W.H. Jackson, Esq.,
Secretary General Committee,
Inhabitants District of Lorne,
Grandin P.O., N.W.T.

Sir:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 16th ulto. transmitting a petition to His Excellency the Governor General in Council, from the inhabitants of the District of Lorne, in the North West Territories, praying for the introduction, at the coming Session of Parliament, of a measure for the complete organization of the District of Saskatchewan as a Province, and to be allowed to send Delegates to Ottawa with a bill of rights with a view to the District being admitted into the Confederation as a Province of the Dominion, and to state that the matter will receive due consideration,

I have the honor to be, etc.
Henry J. Morgan
Acting Under Secretary of State Referred to the Hon. the Privy Council by Command

sgd. J. A. Chapleau
Referred to the Minister of the Interior

sgd. J.A.M.D.Jan9/85[66]

On January 27, Jackson received this acknowledgement of his Bill of Rights from the Secreaty of State's office. On the same day Jackson wrote Riel, "It is evident that they [officials of the federal government] are prepared to communicate with us on something like equal terms."[67]

In order to convince Ottawa that the Bill of Rights had wide support, Riel and his supporters circulated a new petition among the Metis demanding local responsible government. Jackson was now confident that the government would be receptive, and Riel and Jackson began to discuss sending either a delegation or an emissary to Ottawa with the petition.

Sergeant Gagnon of the NWMP had been keeping a watchful eye on these proceedings. He had been under the impression that the Bill of Rights and the large petition containing hundreds of names had been sent to Ottawa together. However, in mid-January, 1885, Gagnon was informed otherwise. He wrote to his superior officer, informing him that the Popular Movement had planned to send a courier to Ottawa in February to present the petition. He said that the courier would act as a diplomat and bargain for the demands contained in the Bill of Rights.[68]

William Henry Jackson's belief that the federal government was now willing to deal with Riel and himself on equal terms was ill-founded. Sir John A. Macdonald evidently had no intention of entering into serious diplomatic discussions with either Jackson or Riel. The Prime Minister's intentions were clear after he received the Bill of Rights in December, 1884: the demands of the people in the North West were not to be met. The Prime Minister did not bring the Bill of Rights to the attention of Parliament. Indeed, Sir John denied ever receiving it. He stood up in Parliament and solemnly declared: "The Bill of Rights had never been officially or indeed in any way promulgated so far as we know, and transmitted to the government."[69] The Bill of Rights had of course been received and acknowledged by the Secretary of State and forwarded to the British Colonial Office.[70]

After the December meetings were over and all the petitions had been sent to Ottawa, Riel began seriously to contemplate his return to the United States. He must have recognized that Ottawa would not negotiate in good faith with the people of the North West Territories as long as he remained in the region.

As 1884 came to a close, the Prince Albert paper turned against Riel and the Popular Movement. Riel was now being described as a madman who was leading the people astray. By March, 1885, the Prince Albert Herald was demanding that the federal government "take care of him." One article stated:

> Riel's later utterances, however, must convince his most ardent admirers, if they would but look calmly at them, that he is losing his balance and suffering a relapse into that awful malady which for a time but a few years ago clouded his intellect and caused him to be placed under restraint. This is the most charitable conclusion that can be arrived at, for few will be found to believe that any one in possession of his faculties could seriously believe or give utterance to such wild chimeras as he has of late indulged in. Just how he can be permitted to go on in this way will depend on circumstances. If his friends do not take care of him the country must.[71]

Just before Christmas, 1884, the North West Council member for the District of Lorne, Mr. D. MacDowall, along with Father André, visited Riel and discussed with him a "financial settlement" for his leaving the country. Riel did enter into negotiations with them. MacDowall wrote to Lieutenant Governor Dewdney, discussing the prospect of procuring bribe money for the purpose of removing Riel from the country. He indicated that, during the meeting of December 27 with Father André and Louis Riel, the following financial deals were discussed:

> Riel's claim for property lost in Red River during 1870 amounted to the larger sum of $100,000, but he will take $35,000 . . . and I believe myself that $3,000 to $5,000 would cart the whole Riel family across the border.[72]

Riel was amenable to the proposition put before him provided that sufficient funds were involved. André informed Lieutenant Governor Dewdney that

> Riel has among the [Metis] a great power which he may turn to good or evil, according to how we use him. Now he seems willing to put all the influence he enjoys on the side of the government, if he gets the help he requires; he asks $30,000 as a first installment, but obtain for him $4,000 or $5,000 and I am bold in saying Mr. MacDowall and I will make him agree to any condition, but in duty bound I am obliged to say that it would be better to concede him that amount than to keep him in the country. I know that if Riel is satisfied, all the [Metis] will be united in the next election, and, as a man, they will vote for Mr. MacDowall, and we will carry everything before us; so I strongly recommend you to use all your influence at Ottawa to obtain for Riel that sum; if things are settled satisfactorily,

> we will not hear much of Riel after that, for he desires to go back to Montana.[73]

This communication was passed on to Sir John A. Macdonald, who, strangely, did not act on the suggestion to pay off Riel to remain outside Canada as he had during the 1870 conflict.[74] Certainly Sir John's history as a successful politician in an age when political patronage and rampant corruption flourished, indicated that he had few reservations regarding bribery when it was required. Macdonald evidently responded to a request from Lieutenant Governor Dewdney just a few months earlier for such patronage in order to buy the favours of the Prince Albert paper. Dewdney had informed him: "I forgot I told you that I have arranged to secure the Prince Albert paper, so if any little patronage can be sent them from below it would be appreciated."[75]

Years earlier, under similar circumstances, Prime Minister Macdonald had not hesitated to send $5,000 to Riel to keep him out of the country so that the Conservative government in Ottawa could avoid the dilemma of losing either the French or English Canadian vote over the emotional issue of amnesty for Thomas Scott's executioners.[76]

Now, however, Macdonald refused to spend $3,000 to get rid of Riel as suggested by his regular advisors in the West. Instead, Macdonald responded, "We have no money to give Riel. How would it look to have to admit we could not govern the country and had to bribe a man to go away."[77]

There may have been other reasons besides a loss of honour that motivated Sir John A. Macdonald to keep Riel in the country. Riel could be used as a political scapegoat in the West. The Prime Minister was not as poorly informed about the difficulties and dissatisfaction in the West as historians have until recently presumed. The Department of Indian Affairs agents and the North West Mounted Police kept Macdonald aware of the details of the mounting resistance to the national policy. Chief Indian Agent J. Ansdell Macrae made reference to the government's surveillance system in August 1884, in a letter to Macdonald. He informed Sir John that some citizens (probably the Clarke clique) were demanding that the government adapt the use of repressive measures against the Popular Movement.

Macrae informed the Prime Minister that several citizens were reporting on the activities of members of the movement. He wrote:

> I would beg to be permitted to suggest that it might be well to employ a man solely for the purpose of watching and reporting the intentions and designs of both the [Metis] and the Indians. In the meantime with the arrangements made, it is thought that their movements will be known, and followed out with as much accuracy as is possible without incurring some slight expense. L. Clarke, Esquire, a priest and one or two Indians are reporting and have promised to report what they can learn: but there are strong reasons for receiving with the greatest of caution what all, save the former, may impart.[78]

A strange situation was developing in the West, an inexplicable situation that did not seem at all rational if the federal government truly desired peace in the territories. Here was a group of speculators who were known to government authorities both in Regina and Ottawa as troublemakers who wanted to provoke a war with the Metis in the West. Indeed, Lawrence Clarke, the very man who was the most active in pursuing this goal, was being set up as a government agent whose information could be used to initiate armed conflict in the West.

If the Prime Minister was depending on Lawrence Clarke (as he later claimed that he was) for information that could initiate a war with the Metis, it was, according to Dewdney, André and others, almost certain that Clarke would pass on messages that would lead to war, since Clarke so ardently desired such a conflict. Clarke was the man already identified by local authorities as being involved in schemes to provoke the government into taking military action.

But a small, carefully controlled war in the West might play into the hands of Prime Minister Macdonald as well. Indeed, Macdonald's government was, by the winter of 1884-5, entering into the most serious crisis ever faced by a Canadian government, even to the present time. This crisis had the potential to spell disaster for the CPR, the federal government, and for the nation of Canada. A small war in the West might very well be the means by which this crisis could be resolved in favour of the federal government.

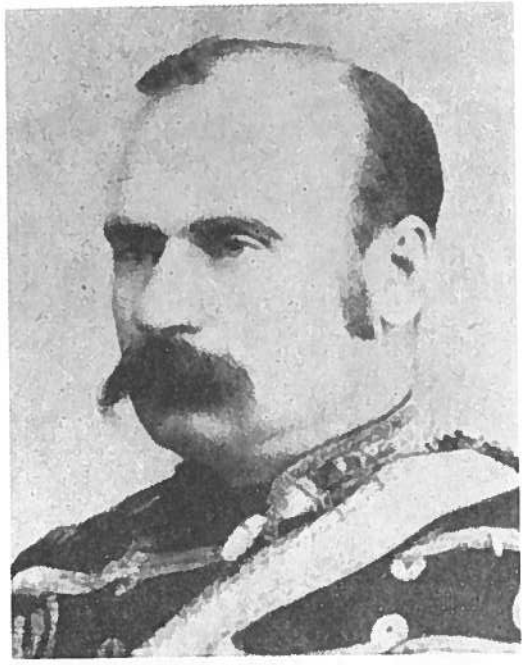
Gabriel Dumont, armed.
photo credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Marguerite, wife of Louis Riel.
photo credit: Public Archives of Canada.

Louis "David" Riel.
photo credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.

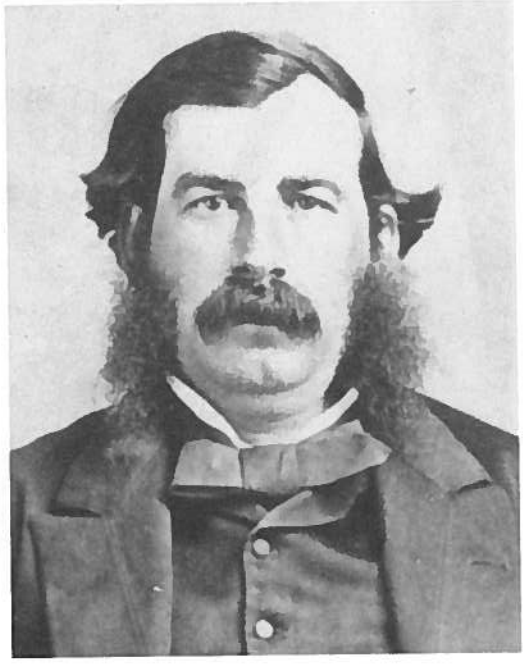
Red River cart convoy, 1860s.
photo credit: Montana Historical Society.

Road allowance people.
photo credit: Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta.



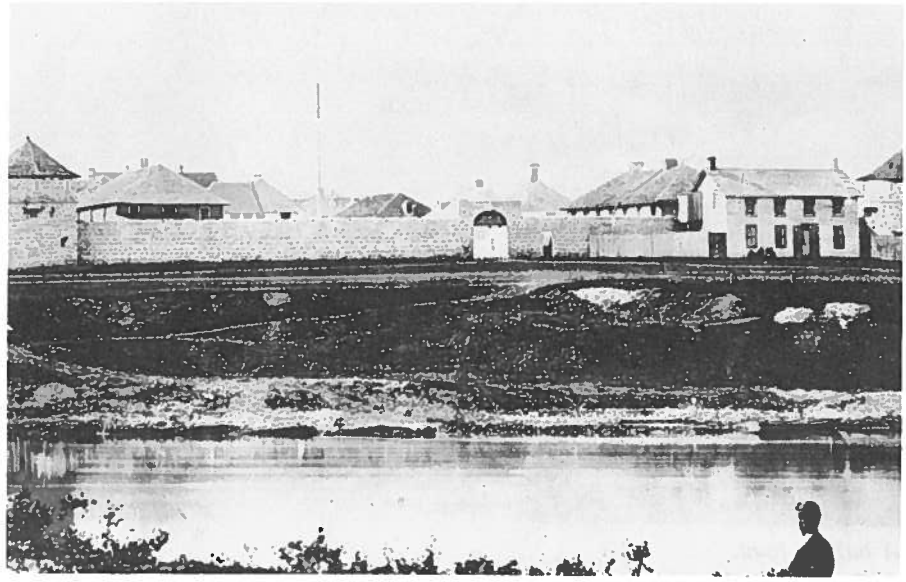
Major L.N.F. Crozier of the N.W.M.P

photo credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.

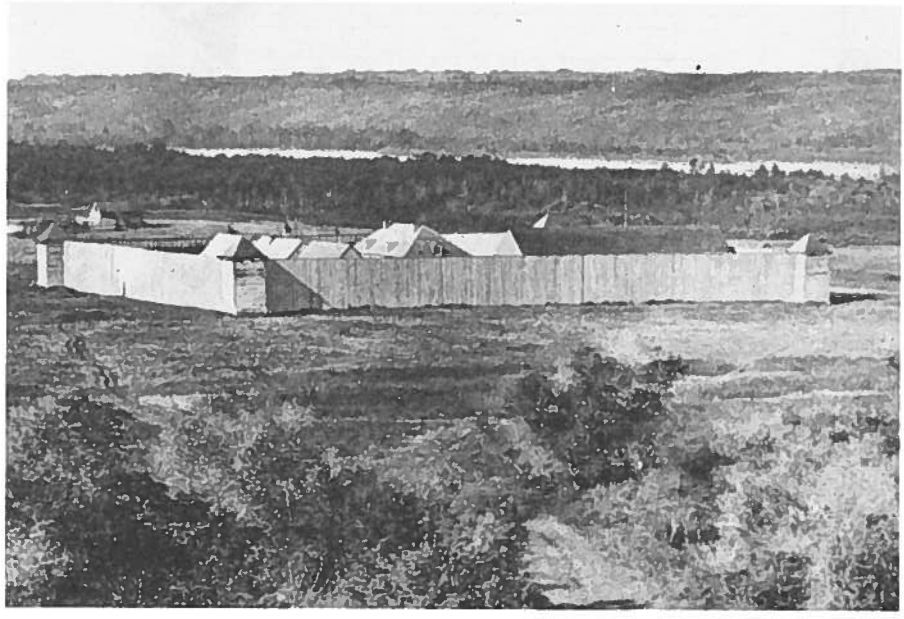


Lawrence Clarke

photo credit: Manitoba Archives.



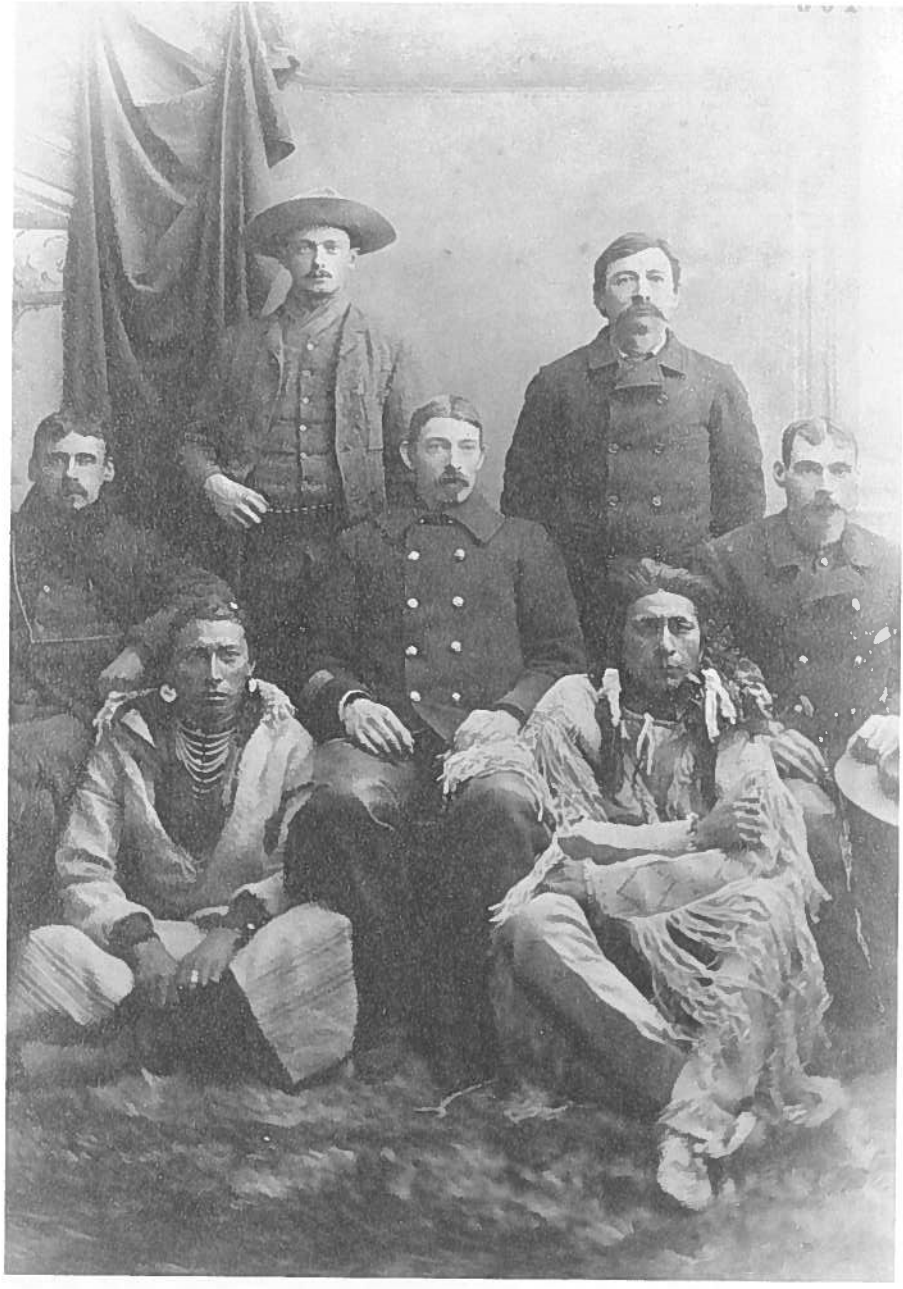
Fort Garry 1870.
photo credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.



Fort Carlton, 1871.
photo credit: Public Archives of Canada.

A buffalo hunt.
photo credit: Public Archives of Canada.

Metis Scouts, 1874.
photo credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.



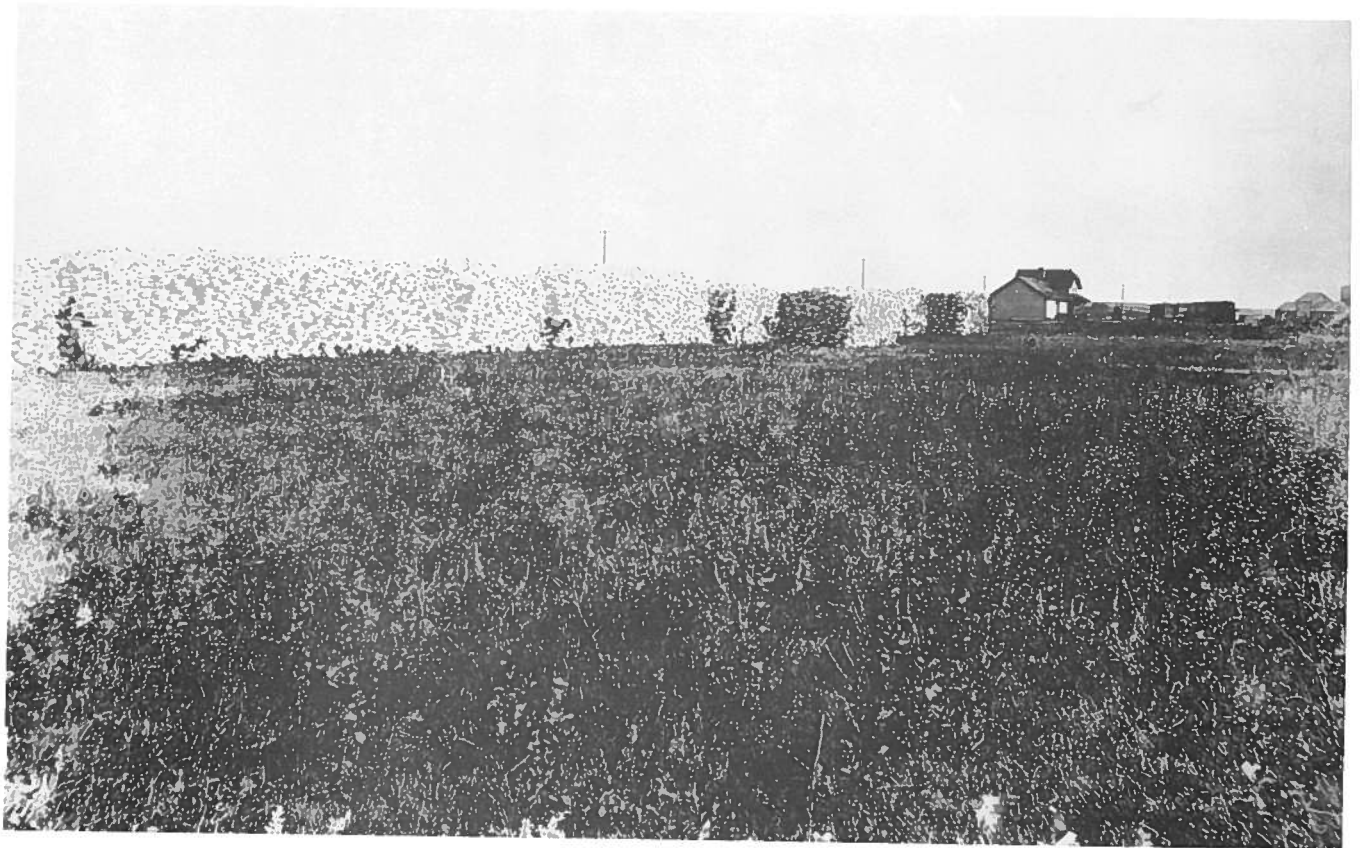
N.W.M.P. Scouts, Black Eagle and Elk in front row.
photo credit: R.C.M.P. Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Red River Provisional Government, 1870.
photo credit: Manitoba archives.

The Provisional Government in chains, 1885.
photo credit: R.C.M.P. Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Canadian Military supply convoy N.W.T. 1885.
photo credit: R.C.M.P. Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Laying track near Maple Creek: 1883.
photo credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.



Buffalo bones awaiting shipment.

photo credit: R.C.M.P. Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER 7

THE CRISIS OF CONFEDERATION: THE 1885 REBELLION IN CONTEXT

Although the motives of Lawrence Clarke and his clique of speculators were clear – they required a military conflict to end the depression in the Prince Albert region – the motives of the federal government in its support of Clarke's "sub rosa" activities are more difficult to establish. However, the Macdonald government in Ottawa had tied its destiny and the destiny of the young nation to that of the CPR, and by 1884 the CPR was facing imminent bankruptcy. The economic collapse of the CPR before its completion to the West Coast would certainly spell political disaster for both the Conservative government and its national policy. Without the railway there could be no agricultural colony in the West. Without the agricultural colony to exploit, there would be insufficient capital, and no market, for the creation and maintenance of a modern industrial state in the Canadian East.

There were several reasons why the CPR was on the verge of bankruptcy by 1884 despite the immense subsidies and gifts it received from the federal government. The immense cost of the CPR project had placed an intolerable strain on the budget of this largely rural and undeveloped country. As well, the graft and corruption surrounding the government and the syndicate were weakening the moral and political fiber of the young nation. Nevertheless, the political battle for the continued financial support of the CPR might have been won by Macdonald's Conservatives had not the CPR gone broke.

It was the change in the CPR route from the northern fringe of the prairies to the south in 1882 that precipitated the economic and later political disasters that led directly to the rebellion of 1885. When this shift took place the colonization company scheme collapsed, thereby ending Macdonald's only hope of recovering any of the costs of the CPR subsidies.

The cost of the shift in routes was immense. Not only did the move necessitate the construction of thousands of miles of branch lines, but also new passes through the mountains had to be planned, surveyed and constructed. Rail lines had to be laid through a network of tunnels that were tremendously expensive to build. The shift to the southern route, so profitable for the CPR in the long run, was the biggest single factor contributing to its effective bankruptcy by late 1884 and early 1885. This shift was made for one overriding reason: to give the CPR syndicate control over the future development of the West.

The CPR faced a dilemma, however, despite the fact that the new location of the railroad put the CPR back in charge of western development. The CPR needed immediate and massive immigration to those parts of the North West Territories that were deemed fit for settlement: the northern fringe of the prairies, the "fertile belt." Without such immigration, the company would continue to lose money, even on its existing lines. On the one hand, the company could not generate sufficient profits from its existing lines to provide funds for western expansion and further construction. On the other hand, massive immigration was not about to occur until the line was constructed all the way through to the West Coast.

Furthermore, the colonization company scheme developed for populating the West, coupled with the generally unsettled question of potential military resistance, had kept the immigration of settlers down below the levels required to make the national policy a success. Indeed, most of the people settling in the Prince Albert region had been speculators, not farmers. These speculators, who now stood to lose everything because of the shift of the CPR to the south, were blaming the Macdonald government for their situation. The depression brought on by the shift of the CPR to the south was creating serious political problems in the West for Prime Minister Macdonald.[1]

By the spring of 1885, newspapers across the country were bewailing the fate of the CPR. Voters and government representatives alike were aware that, should the CPR actually go bankrupt, Canada as a nation would be faced with a devastating economic crisis. These fears were spelled out by C.S. Campbell, son of the Minister of Justice in the Macdonald government. He wrote to his father, describing the chaos that would result should the CPR go broke before construction was completed:

> Next year [if the CPR goes broke] some 10,000 workmen will be thrown out of work and the result will be a tremendous depression all over. The Government will have to take over the road then or advance money to keep it open, and no Government will be able to face it long or keep a reputation of any kind in face of such a popular outcry as there is sure to be.[2]

The impending political crisis associated with the economic collapse of the CPR had implications that went beyond the level of national concerns. By 1885, Canada was still little more than a colony of Great Britain despite the considerable power of the Montreal merchants and Toronto industrialists who were represented in Ottawa by the Macdonald government. The Prime Minister and his cabinet had mixed loyalties. They were still tied by both economic necessity and ethnic loyalty to Great Britain.

The British merchants needed the Canadian transcontinental rail line to aid in their own Far Eastern trading operations. More importantly, Great Britain's War Office required the completion of the railway to the West Coast by 1885 because of serious military setbacks in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, setbacks that threatened Great Britain's control of the vital Suez Canal. As well, Britain was embroiled in other armed conflicts around the world; while engaged in putting down an uprising in Afghanistan, Britain was also involved in a serious conflict that threatened war with Russia.[3] If Britain were to lose the Suez Canal, a Canadian transcontinental railway would be needed as an alternative route for the transportation of troops to the Far East, Afghanistan and possibly Russia.

During the early months of 1885 newspapers across Canada indicated that Great Britain would experience a crisis if a railroad were not completed through friendly British territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts of North America. A commercial fleet on the West Coast of Canada could link up with a completed transcontinental rail line to serve Britain in the lucrative China trade, which was producing huge profits for the imperial countries of Europe as well as the United States.

By March, 1885, a small contingent of British war vessels was stationed on Canada's West Coast. This fleet could be reinforced at any time and made ready for the transportation of British and Canadian troops to the world's battlefronts as soon as the CPR was completed. Troops from England could then land in Halifax, and be transported swiftly to the West Coast where they could once again board ship and embark for

Afghanistan, or for Russia if war were to break out, as expected, with that country.

At the same time, the British military machine was badly over-extended around the world and was in considerable difficulty. Britain, therefore, had much more than a passing interest in the quick and successful completion of the CPR. An example of this concern is reflected in the March 17, 1885, edition of the Regina Leader Post:

> THE NEW ROUTE TO INDIA
> TRANSPORTATION OF BRITISH TROOPS OVER
> THE CANADIAN PACIFIC
>
> Mr. R.D. Angus of the CPR, and in reference to the communication to be received by the Canadian Government from the British Government asking what is the earliest date at which communication with the Pacific can be had over the Canadian Pacific Railway, said that the Intelligence Department of the Imperial Government had the matter under consideration. In the event of the Suez Canal becoming closed, the shortest route to India would be over the Canadian Pacific. This route, in the event of a war with Russia will be the shortest route to both India and China. Great Britain must have an alternate route, as complications may arise in the Mediterranean which would make communications with Egypt difficult.[4]

British officials clearly felt that, should war break out with Russia, England's victory or defeat would in large part depend upon the completion of the CPR. The new route from Great Britain to the Far East through Canada would actually take less travelling time than the old route via the Suez Canal. This time factor had tremendous military and commercial significance. The Prince Albert Times reported on February 20, 1885:

> The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway will provide England with a new route to Hong Kong, occupying but a little over a month, or sixteen days less than the Suez Canal route. This would enable England to land troops in China two days earlier than French troops starting at the same time, or the Russians from Odessa, in the event of the Suez Canal falling into hostile hands.[5]

Clearly, the completion of the CPR was a vital step in England's plans

for continued world conquest. It would provide a strategic link in the transportation lines to the battlefields and commercial theatres of action around the world.

Despite the urgency with which both Canadian and British interests required the completion of the CPR, further public funding of the company was becoming politically hazardous. The Canadian public recognized that the CPR had wrung millions of dollars from the government as its payoff for the generous "campaign funds" that had led to the Pacific Scandal of 1872; by 1885, cabinet ministers were very sensitive to the public's growing anger with the CPR for its misuse of public funds. Certainly the Conservative government did not want to face further close scrutiny of its relationship with the CPR syndicate.

Sir Alexander Campbell, Minister of Justice from May 1881 to September 1885, was not personally implicated in any of the scandals. Nevertheless, by March of 1885, the question of further funding for the CPR was so overwhelmingly unpopular with the ordinary citizens of Canada that he, like other high-ranking Conservatives, was being politically threatened by the CPR's imminent bankruptcy. Cabinet ministers felt that they would be condemned if they allowed the CPR to collapse, and even more ardently condemned by the voters if they came to its financial rescue once again. On March 3, 1885, Campbell was advised by his son that he would be wise to resign from his position immediately, before the CPR's financial collapse:

> Apropos of the CPR I hope you are not going to give them more money. You were talking of resigning some time ago and I think you will never have a better chance to escape with credit than now, it ought to have been last Session but still you might retire with dignity now, but after all of the solemn protestations about the calculation, by competent men and they are asking for more money now shows either that they are not fit to manage so great an enterprise or that there is a large leak somewhere and that a little of the Boston Tweed business is going on.[6]

Because of the corruption associated with the public funding of the CPR the political situation was critical, and astute politicians, recognizing that the end was near for the CPR, were thinking of resigning before the collapse occurred. For some, this seemed the only way of extricating themselves from the political and economic morass into which the CPR had led them.

By March of 1885, there was no doubt that the CPR would go bankrupt unless it received additional federal funding. In fact, by March 1885, the CPR's financial troubles were so grave that the company was unable to continue with railway construction. In mid-March the railway's general manager sent a telegram to President George Stephen, indicating that there were insufficient funds left to pay the construction workers' wages.[7] In British Columbia, three hundred armed strikers were being held at bay by the NWMP, having struck when the pay car failed to arrive.

On March 18, 1885, a Conservative caucus was called in an attempt to come to some decision about the CPR's financial crisis.[8] There was talk among the caucus members of the company issuing $15 million in bonds, half to the shareholders and half to the government. Other ideas emerged from the meeting. One suggestion was that the government release the mortgage of the last session and take $15 million of first preference bonds, and then take a second mortgage on the railway for the remaining $15 million. But nothing came of these suggestions. Further public funding of the CPR had simply become a political impossibility.

Despite the urgency of Britain's war needs, and despite the importance of the railway to the the national policy, the CPR did not receive additional public assistance until after the beginning of the Metis rebellion of 1885. The CPR was seen by the voting public as having reached the end of its period of grace. It now had to pay its own way. An article in the March 18 edition of the Saskatchewan Herald summed up the nation's dilemma: "The Country is so committed to the railway that it cannot be allowed to lag now. But the limit to which the Government feels justified in going has been well nigh reached."[9]

The limit had indeed been reached. When the CPR asked the government for an additional $5 million in March, 1885, the request was turned down by the cabinet, which recognized that further funding of the CPR would be political suicide. Sir Joseph Pope, Prime Minister Macdonald's personal secretary, described the Prime Minister's dilemma:

> Ministers were decidedly adverse to any further assistance out of the public treasury. The Prime Minister was told that it could not be done. On the other hand, if it were not done, irretrievable disaster stared Canada in the face. If the Canadian Pacific Railway went down, what of the future of the North West? What of the credit of Canada itself? He had, I believe, almost if not altogether, made up his mind that further assistance was impossible.[10]

Laying track in the Lower Fraser Valley, 1881
photo credit Saskatchewan Archives Board photograph # R-B 3279

Sir John's dilemma was indeed a difficult one.

However, the Prime Minister may already have found a way out of his difficulties. A small, carefully controlled rebellion in the West might solve the problem for him. The execution of Thomas Scott in 1870 had provided the political justification for the destruction of the Metis provisional government and the takeover of the West by Canada. Would not another rebellion, brought on by Louis Riel, serve the same purpose? The Orangemen of Ontario would certainly rally once more, and the CPR could absolve itself of past guilt by becoming the savior of the nation. If it could transport troops to the West in time to crush a Metis rebellion it would certainly justify its existence to the people of Canada, and further public funding could be obtained.

It is difficult to say precisely what motivated the ailing Prime Minister into taking bold action to save the CPR. It may have been George Stephen's letter of March 11, 1885, in which he described the company's immediate ruin unless the Prime Minister took action,[11] or it may have been Stephen's earlier communication of January 17, 1885, in which he was quite explicit. In this letter, Stephen told the Prime Minister,

> It is as clear as noon day Sir John unless you, yourself, say what is to be done, nothing but disaster will result. The question is too big for some of our friends and nothing but your own authority and influence will carry anything that will accomplish the object. Please put this in the fire.[12]

Most historians have recognized that the Metis rebellion, coming at precisely the right moment in March 1885, quite clearly saved the federal government from political limbo and the CPR from bankruptcy. Donald Creighton, one of Canada's eminent historians, articulated Prime Minister Macdonald's dilemma this way:

> The two disasters — the revolt on the prairies and the collapse of the railway — had come together in time. And together they might destroy him and his Canada . . . They were separate problems. They would have to be dealt with separately. They could even be played off against each other. And in that possibility did not there still lie a real hope? He could use the railway to defend the West. He could use the West to justify the railway.[13]

Creighton saw the success of the CPR and the destruction of the Metis

as two separate events that were somehow coincidental. He recognized that these two "separate" events "could even be played off against each other" by the Prime Minister in such a way as to save the CPR and the Conservative government. Creighton saw the Metis rebellion as a fortunate coincidence that provided Sir John A. Macdonald with the political means to justify further financial support for the CPR syndicate. They were not, however, separate events. They were intricately interrelated events that came together not through coincidence, but by design.

Agents Provocateurs Agitate for War in the West

During the bitterly cold months of January and February, 1885, the level of political agitation dropped off in the North West Territories. The Metis and their leaders hoped that the federal government would now engage in serious diplomatic talks with an appropriate spokesman from the North West. Although it was Jackson's initial plan to present the petition personally to the Governor General, it was by now clear that neither he nor Riel would be acceptable for this task. Riel had not been recognized by the government as a British subject, and Jackson was too young and too obscure to be taken seriously in Ottawa. What was needed was a person who knew and understood the Metis, and who also had some political influence with the Conservative government in Ottawa. Accordingly, discussions took place among the Metis to select a courier who would have the interests of the Metis at heart and who could win the ear of the federal government.

Little is known about the specific debates that took place regarding the selection of the courier who would take the petition and the Bill of Rights to Ottawa. However, Father André seems to have had a hand in the selection, picking Lawrence Clarke as the delegate, despite André's knowledge of Clarke's desire to bring war to the frontier. André's fears may have been allayed by other Metis leaders who were later believed to have been in the service of the federal government. Among these people were Father Fourmand, Philip Garnot, Charles Nolin, and others who may have been working with Lawrence Clarke as spies and *provocateurs* among their own people.[14] These people, many of whom were ostensibly allies of Riel, later became "professional witnesses," giving effective and damning evidence against Riel at his trial.[15]

For the majority of the Metis who were loyal to Riel and were unaware of the intrigues of their own traitors, it seemed that Lawrence Clarke would be an excellent choice to carry the petition to Ottawa and bargain with the federal government on their behalf. It would be a political coup if Clarke, as a leader of the local Conservative hierarchy and well-known in Ottawa, would espouse the Metis demands contained in the Bill of Rights and argue their merits with his friends in Ottawa. Clarke was in fact chosen as the courier. The Metis hoped that, because of his position in the Conservative party, he would be successful in making an eleventh-hour compromise with the federal government. The Prince Albert Herald carried this account of the selection of Lawrence Clarke:

> In the darkening clouds of dissatisfaction the Metis leaders still showed considerable forebearance. They asked the Honourable Lawrence Clarke, a one-time member of the North West Territories Council to proceed to Ottawa and make representations to the government on their behalf.[16]

Clarke made the journey to Ottawa in February, 1885. Throughout the lengthening days of March, no word was received from Clarke regarding the negotiations in Ottawa. The Metis soon became uneasy about the negotiations going on between their emissary and the government. Their anxiety and sense of foreboding increased daily as they awaited word from Clarke. But as the weeks passed and no news was received, the uneasy feelings gave way to fear, then anger, as tension mounted in the North West.

On March 11, Major L.N.F. Crozier, commanding officer of the NWMP detachment at Fort Carlton, telegraphed Commissioner Irvine in Regina, indicating that there were rumours that the Metis were expecting to receive a large supply of arms and ammunition from somewhere in the United States.[17] Upon receipt of this message from Irvine, Lieutenant Governor Dewdney informed Prime Minister Macdonald that there actually was to be a shipment of arms.

Although Dewdney felt that the Metis were organizing a bluff to give more weight to the bargaining that they assumed was occurring in Ottawa, he nevertheless urged an increase in the police force in the Fort Carlton region. He wrote to Macdonald:

> If the [Metis] mean business the sooner they are put down the better. They are like Indians, when they gather and get excited it is difficult to handle them, but if they are taken unawares there is little difficulty in arresting their leaders.[18]

On March 13, Major Crozier reported that a Metis rebellion was likely to break out at any moment. One March 15, Commissioner Irvine left Regina for Fort Carlton with one hundred police reinforcements. The same day Father Fourmand made an effort to sow dissention among the Metis who were remaining loyal to Louis Riel: he delivered a sermon in which he threatened the Metis with the refusal of the Last Sacrament for anyone who took up arms against the Queen. But despite the gravity of his threat, the Metis continued to meet and mobilize. This mobilization, however, was more the result of the fear than a planned attempt at an insurrection. No overt military action of any kind was to be taken by the Metis until Clarke returned from Ottawa. If there was any planning involved in the Metis mobilization prior to Clarke's return from Ottawa, it was designed only as a show of force for the local authorities, so that the Conservative party might take more seriously Metis demands spelled out in the Bill of Rights.

While awaiting Clarke's return, the Metis were attending a religious novena. During the novena there were political meetings at which the government was severely criticized. Potential allies were being asked to join forces with the Metis in the event of a conflict. Angry rhetoric, the result of years of frustration, was directed at the government. On his way home from one meeting, Gabriel Dumont quietly and sadly informed his companions that "we will have to walk in blood before the government will give us our rights." [19] Gabriel Dumont was beginning to realize that the federal government was planning some strategy against the Metis whose land claims had not been settled. But no direct military preparations were made; there were no concrete plans for either attack or defense. Such plans would be contingent upon Clarke's report upon his return from Ottawa.

Clarke returned from Ottawa on March 18, 1885. He was met by a delegation of Metis who anxiously inquired about the government's answer to their petition. Norman Black, who wrote his history of the rebellion in 1913, described the way in which the rebellion was started at this historic meeting:

> As a generation has now elapsed since those troublesome days, the truth may now plainly be told . . . As a matter of fact the actual resort to arms was caused by an indiscreet remark of the Honourable Lawrence Clarke . . . Early in the spring, Mr. Clarke visited Ottawa. On his return, while driving north

> from Qu'Appelle to Fort Carlton, he met a group of [Metis] who inquired of him what answer the Government was going to make to their petitions. His reply was that the only answer they would get would be bullets, and that, indeed, on his way northward, he had passed a camp of five hundred policemen who were coming up to capture the [Metis] agitators. While this incident has not figured prominently in former English accounts of the rebellion, the facts are common property to this day all though the Batoche, Duck Lake and Prince Albert country.[20]

Lawrence Clarke's message to the Metis delegation was not the indiscreet remark that Norman Black presumed; it was the official government response to the Popular Movement's petition and the Bill of Rights. But Clarke's statement to the Metis was false. There was no body of police on its way to capture Riel. If Clarke was referring to Irvine's force of one hundred men, it was not near Prince Albert. Irvine's reinforcements were camped at Qu'Appelle. Furthermore, there was no reason for the police to arrest Riel; he had not even been charged with an offence since his return to Canada. Nevertheless, Clarke's comment about the police caused immediate concern among the Metis. The group that met Clarke rode immediately to the village of St. Laurent where a Metis religious celebration was in progress. When Gabriel Dumont passed on to Riel Clarke's comments, Riel became extremely excited and cried, "Aux armes, aux armes."[21]

A council of Metis leaders was immediately called, during which the Metis swore to defend to the death themselves and their leader. Raiding parties were sent out to seize all available supplies and weapons from the local merchants.[22] These actions were interpreted by the European settlers and the federal government as the initiation of an armed insurrection. This interpretation was reinforced when the Metis took as hostages several people they considered to be spies. All of these activities came as an immediate and direct result of Clarke's comment of March 18.

Why did Lawrence Clarke give the Metis this false message? Norman Black suggested that it was simply an "ill-judged practical joke." But surely it was much more than that. The Prime Minister had been made aware of Clarke's ability as an informer and his potential as an *agent provocateur* as early as August 1884. In fact, Macrae's telegram in August had suggested that Clarke was already employed as a spy.

It is impossible to tell from the literature available whether or not Clarke

was actually making history *sub rosa,* as he claimed during the campaign of 1883. But by August 1884 he had earned a reputation as an informer and a prime candidate for use as a double agent by officials of the federal government both locally and in Ottawa. Furthermore, government and police records from as far back as 1875 indicated that Clarke already had valuable experience as an *agent provocateur.*[23] He had been the person responsible for bringing the police to the region in the first place, thereby providing the military support needed to keep Treaty Number Six in line with the plans of the national policy.

Lawrence Clarke had made the trip to Ottawa in February of 1885 in the capacity of a political emissary of the Metis. It is significant that no Canadian historian has made note of this fact. Norman Black did record how Lawrence Clarke started the rebellion on his return trip from Ottawa, but he did not explain what Clarke was doing in the capital. Furthermore, Black suggested that Clarke's remark about the impending police attack on the Metis took place at a chance meeting between Clarke and Dumont, which gives a false impression. Clarke was sent to Ottawa as an official spokesman for the people of the North West, and passed on his false message about an impending police attack in his official capacity as a negotiator with Ottawa.

It is therefore probable that when Clarke met with government officials in Ottawa, they created a plot to incite the Metis into a state of armed rebellion. The CPR was in desperate straits by March 1885. If the CPR was to be saved by a "rebellion" of a handful of Catholics in the West, and if the loyal Orangemen of Ontario were to deliver more public funds to the hated CPR syndicate, such a rebellion would have to occur immediately.

Existing records do not indicate who Clarke met with in Ottawa. It could have been Sir John A. Macdonald himself, or one or more of his cabinet ministers. It does seems likely, however, that as an official emissary from the North West Territories, Clarke would have met with high-ranking government officials. If the records are not clear about who Clarke talked with in Ottawa, they are clear about his movements on his return trip, and about his later actions.

On his return trip from Ottawa, he stopped in Regina at Lieutenant Governor Dewdney's request. Clarke may or may not have informed Dewdney about the plans to start a rebellion. There is no record showing what exchange of information occurred between Clarke and Dewdney at this meeting. However, when Clarke left Dewdney, he proceeded

directly to his encounter with Gabriel Dumont and the anxious Metis who were awaiting a response from Ottawa. There are several newspaper accounts of this meeting. Both the Saskatchewan Herald and the Prince Albert Herald indicated that the Metis were in a state of excitement as they waited for Clarke. The Saskatchewan Herald's correspondent reported:

> *Lawrence Clarke is expected to return with the next mail* from the East. The [Metis] I am informed can muster 1,100 men able to carry arms that are talking very boldly although they say the commission of any overt act is postponed until after the Lenten season; while others say *they have given the Government until after the arrival of this mail for an answer to their memorials.*[24] (Emphasis added).

The Prince Albert Herald reported:

> The Honourable Lawrence Clarke brought back from Ottawa a most disheartening message. As chief factor for the Hudson's Bay Post at Fort Carlton, he had naturally the confidence of the natives and [Metis] who had traded for years with the great company. The message of the Honourable Lawrence Clarke was that the petitions of the natives would be answered by bullets.[25]

Late in the day of March 18, 1885, Lawrence Clarke sent a coded telegram from Fort Carlton to Governor Dewdney in Regina. Clarke used a code known only to him, the police and government agents in the region. This document stands as evidence that Clarke was the man responsible for bringing on the armed conflict of 1885. Below is a copy of the coded telegram sent by Clarke to Ottawa. Clearly, the message dealt with the question of troop reinforcements and the proposed capture of Riel.

The partly decoded message said:

> From Carlton March 18th (Key-45)
> Apparently flattened out are tampering with Indians no success need be apprehended as ? may have to be made and essential reinforcements should come no better time to deal with lawyer ? and followers once for all. Albert to abandon maneuver will turn out arms should be sent back. L. Clarke[26]

Even after decoding, the message made little sense; the terms used were so esoteric that no one other than those people involved in the plot could understand them. But the message did seem to advise that there was no better time to capture Louis Riel (the "lawyer").

The code itself should have been sufficient to keep vital information out of the hands of the Metis. The message was contrived so that it would make sense only to the conspirators. And it was designed to keep information from honest police officers, such as Major Crozier and Sergeant Gagnon, who were trying desperately to prevent war and to maintain law and order.

Police Commissioner Irvine, now at Fort Qu'Appelle with one hundred police reinforcements, appeared to be awaiting word from Lawrence Clarke before dispatching the troops to the Fort Carlton region. On March 19, one day after Clarke's inflammatory statement to the Metis, Lieutenant Governor Dewdney received this enigmatic telegram from Commissioner Irvine:

> Have you heard anything from Lawrence Clarke?[27]

Why would the Police Commissioner in charge of the police reinforcements now at Fort Qu'Appelle be waiting for word from Lawrence Clarke? Irvine should have been seeking word from Major Crozier, who was in charge of the police detachment in the Fort Carlton area. This strongly suggests that regular channels for police information were being circumvented, and that Lawrence Clarke was the central figure in the scheme. Commissioner Irvine's terse telegram to Dewdney implies a connection between Clarke and the timing of the movement of troops from Fort Qu'Appelle to Fort Carlton.

The usual time required for a forced march over winter roads from Fort Qu'Appelle to Fort Carlton was about one week. Irvine's reinforcements could therefore arrive at Fort Carlton on or about March 25. If Clarke was to be successful in goading the Metis into taking up arms against the police, he would have to do so before Irvine's reinforcements arrived. The Metis might not respond to provocation once the balance of power had shifted.

From March 18 until war broke out, Lawrence Clarke kept up a program of provocation not only with the Metis, but also with the citizens of Prince Albert and with the police. After the Metis took hostages and secured provisions from the stores in their communities, it was Clarke

who carried the message of their activities to Prince Albert. Captain Thomas Agnew, an officer who later participated in the battle against the Metis at Duck Lake, recorded:

> When the Honourable Lawrence Clarke, Hudson's Bay Factor, brought down the news of the uprising, all the men were on the ice curling. There was less excitement than one might think. Messages were dispatched to all the settlers to leave their homesteads and come to the barracks for protection . . . All the men were formed into companies of volunteers . . . Most of the influential men of the country had been told that an outbreak was likely to occur at any time so they were more or less prepared for it.[28]

On March 19, Joseph McKay, a Metis scout under the command of Major Crozier at Fort Carlton, arrived in Prince Albert with orders to enroll a large detachment of citizens as a volunteer militia. This contingent of just under a hundred men was in high spirits as it left for Fort Carlton. "Much excitement and enthusiasm prevailed, though the universal impression was that nothing more than a show of force would prove necessary."[29]

Although everyone was preparing for war, the Saskatchewan Herald, a politically independent newspaper with Conservative leanings, carried the following story of the mobilization of the Prince Albert volunteers and their planned trek to Fort Carlton:

> The question, "What is it all about?" would persist in coming up. Look which way you would, no satisfactory answer suggested itself. The question of rebellion pure and simple was not to be thought of; for even if the French halfbreeds, at whose door the trouble was popularly laid, had any grievances that would justify revolt, their isolated situation and general poverty and want of an organized commissariat forbade all hope of success. It could not be a desire to exterminate the white settlers who are peopling the country; for the [Metis] are far from being a bloodthirsty race. On the contrary, they are as easy going, free-handed and good-hearted a race as is to be found anywhere — traits of character that sometimes caused them to be led astray by designing people.[30]

But if the independent press could make little sense out of the government's troop movements, the Metis were even more confused.

Major Crozier did not seem to be in charge of these movements either. Expecting the worst, Crozier had sent a telegram to Lieutenant Governor Dewdney pleading for immediate settlement of Metis land claims.[31] His advice was ignored. As a result of the government's failure to act on his advice, Crozier suspected that the Metis might attack as soon as their novena was finished.

The novena ended on March 19, 1885. That same day the Metis attended a mass rally to celebrate the conversion of William Henry Jackson to the Catholic faith. They carried their weapons to this celebration on the pretext that they were needed for a mass fire of joy. In reality, however, this was a preparation for armed resistance to the expected five hundred police. Riel addressed the gathering at his eloquent best:

> The Ottawa Government has been maliciously ignoring the rights of the aboriginal [Metis] during the last fifteen years. The petitions which have been sent to the Government on that matter and concerning the grievances which all classes have against its policy are not listened to; moreover, the Dominion has taken the high-handed way of answering peaceable complaints by dispatching and reinforcing their mounted police. The avowed purpose being to confirm in the Saskatchewan their Government spoliation and usurpation of the rights and liberties of all classes of men, except their resident oppressors the Hudson's Bay Company and land speculators, by threatening our liberty and our lives. The Aboriginal [Metis] are determined to save their rights or to perish at once. They are supported with no doubtful energy by a large number of able Halfbreeds, who have come to the Saskatchewan, less as emigrants than as proscripts from Manitoba. Those of the emigrants who have been long enough in this country to realize that Ottawa does not intend to govern the Northwest so much as to plunder it, are in sympathy with the movement.[32]

Riel closed his speech by imploring, "Justice commands to take up arms."

As part of the preparations for the anticipated attack by the Canadian government's police, a provisional government was quickly elected. Riel did not participate as a member because he was not recognized as a British subject and he did not want to provide the federal government with a legal basis for his arrest. He was, however, the unofficial and undisputed

leader of the provisional government of 1885.

Military matters were under the command of Gabriel Dumont, who chose Joseph Delorme and Patrice Tourond as his assistants. Dumont quickly made ready to offer a stout resistance to the expected attack. On March 19, Riel's position hardened. Even though the Metis militia was not operating offensively, Riel sent an ultimatum to Major Crozier, demanding the surrender of Fort Carlton. He threatened a war of extermination against all Whites if his demands were not met. Major Crozier, evidently believing Riel to be incapable of carrying out such a horrible threat, summarily rejected his demands.

At the same time, Hilliard Mitchell, who owned a store at Duck Lake, was attempting to act as a go-between for the Metis and the police, each of whom accused him of spying for the other side. Mitchell, however, delivered several messages between Crozier and Riel, and did his best to try to stop the impending clash. On the 20th of March, one day after Riel had sent his ultimatum to Major Crozier threatening a war of extermination, Mitchell received this note from Crozier:

> Carlton, March 20, 1885
>
> Dear Mr. Mitchell:
>
> I am much obliged to you for the information. It is a great pity that there is so much unnecessary talk and so many absurd rumors about. I will be greatly obliged if you will keep me informed.
>
> I saw Mr. Arkand this morning. I told him of the absurdity of the rumors he mentioned.
>
> Faithfully yours,
> (Signed) Crozier.[33]

Clearly, Major Crozier, who knew the Metis of the region better than most agents of the federal government, did not believe that the Metis were capable of a bloody massacre. He attributed much of the trouble to "unnecessary talk" and "absurd rumors." Crozier may not have been informed about Clarke's plans to instigate a war with the Metis, but he was certainly aware that someone was creating trouble by spreading rumors.

Major Crozier intended to take no action that would cause an increase in hostilities. He was aware that one hundred police were on their way from Qu'Appelle and would probably arrive at Fort Carlton on or before March 25. Rather than engaging in aggressive action that would only

inflame the Metis, Crozier travelled through the northern communities soliciting the support of the English-speaking Metis. He was not successful in his campaign for their support, but he did manage to shift their position to one of neutrality.

By March 22, there was a military stalemate in the Fort Carlton region. Neither the police nor the Metis were committed to aggressive military action. Both Crozier's troops and Dumont's men were busy foraging throughout the countryside in an attempt to gain control of the available supplies of food and munitions. Although these government and Metis military parties were in close proximity to each other, they did not actually clash until March 26.

Major Crozier knew that if things remained quiet until Commissioner Irvine arrived with his reinforcements there was a very good chance that the Metis would not proceed with action that might lead to war. Such a show of force, coupled with the additional strength of the volunteers, would perhaps be sufficient to demonstrate the futility of the Metis resort to arms.

Clarke had to move quickly. Unless actual fighting occurred, the government in Ottawa would have no patriotic rallying cry, no rationale for mobilizing and transporting the five thousand militia now preparing for war against the Metis of the North West.

While Clarke was provoking a war in the West, government officials took steps to divide and further fragment the expected resistance. As the two forces drew closer to armed conflict, the Prime Minister set processes in motion to ensure that the expected "rebellion" would not get out of control. There were reports in the western press that the unpopular Deputy Minister of the Interior, Mr. Burgess, would resign from his position because of ill health. In fact, Joseph Royal, the French Catholic Member of Parliament for Provencher, replaced Burgess just prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Royal was a close friend of Bishop Tache, and because of his connections, Royal was popular among the French-speaking Metis.

Further divide-and-conquer tactics were employed by the Lieutenant Governor. In late March of 1885, just a few days prior to the outbreak of armed hostilities at Duck Lake, Lieutenant Governor Dewdney made plans to cause dissension among the Metis. Dewdney wrote to Macdonald:

> I have been considering whether it would not be a good plan to bring on the election for our North West Council and give

> the district here referred to as the District of Lorne, another member which they are entitled to; it would give them an opportunity of sending a man of their own, a Metis, and might cause some dissention among themselves. MacDowall could do a little wire-pulling with them in regard to that; he is a favourite with them.[34]

Clearly, Dewdney was attempting to create divisions among the Metis by offering them a seat on the North West Council. However, this did not work; the offer came much too late.

Meanwhile, knowing that the rebellion was being engineered by Lawrence Clarke, the Conservative government in Ottawa set up a commission to look into the long-standing Metis land claims. On March 23, Sir John A. Macdonald sent two telegrams to Governor Dewdney in Regina. The first, not in code, stated that a commission had been set up to adjust without delay the claims of the French-speaking Metis:

> Intentions of government are to enforce the law and keep the peace. The land claims of the [Metis] are to be adjusted without delay. A Commission to proceed to the spot immediately and get the necessary evidence. Are not aware of any cause of discontent.[35]

The second telegram, in code, told a vastly different story, and revealed the government's true intentions. Troops from the East were being readied. General Middleton was already on his way to Winnipeg to take charge of war plans. The Winnipeg militia had been mobilized and were ready to march. All of this had occurred before a shot had been fired. As the telegram revealed, the government knew exactly what to expect, and was prepared for it. The coded message informed Dewdney:

> General Middleton proceeds to Red River tonight. Orders sent to Winnipeg militia to be ready to move. Please forward all intelligence on receipt.[36]

The federal government's friends in the West acted to neutralize potential Indian participation on the side of the Metis. Father Lacombe, using his prestige and friendship with Chief Crowfoot, kept the powerful Blackfoot confederation out of the war. It was Governor Dewdney's own actions, however, that had the most significant effect on the Indians. On March 12, 1885, Dewdney set in motion plans to prohibit the sale

of fixed ammunition in the troubled northeastern regions of Saskatchewan.[37] This precaution did have an effect on the Metis resistance in that it prevented the Indians from joining the movement *en masse*. It also prevented the Metis from obtaining vital military supplies. Throughout the short war that followed, the Metis were desperately short of ammunition. Unprepared as they were for war, they were forced to melt down such household articles as old tea chests to obtain lead for bullets.

Dewdney took further precautions on March 26, 1885. In an effort to prevent the Indians from joining the expected outbreak, Dewdney threatened those Indians who were considering joining forces with Riel. On March 23, he informed the Prime Minister:

> I have let it be known that the treatment of our Indians in the future will depend on the stand they now take.[38]

The English-speaking Metis had just prior to the war received title to their plots of land. The radical European settlers had had their Farmers' Union co-opted by the Conservative political machine, and the powerful Blackfoot had been neutralized by the Church. The Indians of the West had buckled under government pressure because of its control of their food supply. Dewdney's actions in stopping the flow of ammunition at the last minute probably kept many groups of potential insurgents out of the struggle. By March 25, the Metis had been isolated from nearly all of their potential allies.

By March 25, Lawrence Clarke had one last task to perform. Since the Metis had not attacked the police at Fort Carlton, he had to manipulate the police into attacking the Metis. And this had to be accomplished before Irvine's reinforcements arrived at Fort Carlton.

On March 25, Clarke acted boldly. He sent Thomas MacKay to Prince Albert to delay Irvine's support column for another day. Irvine's column had in fact mysteriously been one day late in departing from Qu'Appelle. Now a delay of another day was required. MacKay met Irvine's force at Prince Albert on March 25 and passed on a false message. Captain Ernest Chambers of the NWMP reported:

> Colonel Irvine's original intention was to have reached Carlton on the 25th of March. This might have been done had it appeared imperative, but upon the morning after his arrival [at Prince Albert] Colonel Irvine had the assurance of Mr. Thomas MacKay, who had just returned from Fort Carlton that all was quiet there.[39]

Colonel Irvine could have arrived in time to prevent the Battle of Duck Lake, but it appears that he deliberately ensured that his force would arrive too late. One newspaper article described how Colonel Irvine marched his men to the ridge overlooking what would later be the scene of the battle between Crozier's force and the Metis, and then returned, inexplicably, to Prince Albert.[40] This gave Clarke another day in which to initiate the war with the Metis.

Norman Black described Clarke's actions of March 26, 1885:

> We have told of the part unintentionally played by the Honourable Lawrence Clarke in causing the [Metis] to take up arms and seize available stores, and we referred in passing to the mystery surrounding Crozier's rash sortie from Carlton. [Here, Black referred to Crozier's clash with Dumont's force at Duck Lake on March 26, where the first battle of the war took place.] In causing it, Mr. Clarke again played a prominent part. When Sergeant Stewart's convoy returned to the Fort, and Crozier had quite properly given up the idea of making any onslaught upon the armed rioters at Duck Lake, Mr. Clarke and other leading Prince Albert volunteers, were so ill advised as, in the hearing of different people, to challenge Crozier to "teach the rebels a lesson if he were not afraid of them."[41]

Major Crozier, though an excellent soldier, nevertheless was known to be somewhat erratic, especially when provoked. Forced through his own pride to respond to the insinuations of cowardice, he ordered his troops to move out to Duck Lake immediately, knowing full well that Irvine's reinforcements were due within twenty-four hours. But Lawrence Clarke, Captain Moore, and the other influential men of the volunteer corps had not expected a stout resistance from the Metis. They were unprepared for the military brilliance of Gabriel Dumont, who was familiar with the hit-and-run tactics that had been employed by the Plains Indians against the overwhelming firepower of the American military machine.

Major Crozier led his force into a deadly trap. When the police and volunteers encountered the Metis force in a natural *cul-de-sac* in the bush near Duck Lake, they had no idea that so many of them would be killed. The Metis force, largely hidden in the underbrush, was prepared to capture the entire column. As Major Crozier led his column into the *cul-de-sac,* he saw two men advancing toward his force. Isidore Dumont and a Cree warrior, an old man, advanced under a flag of truce to

negotiate with Major Crozier and his chief scout, Joe MacKay. As the four men talked, the Metis and Indian riflemen silently surrounded the police on three sides. A scuffle broke out between MacKay and the Cree warrior, who made a sudden grab for MacKay's rifle.

Isidore Dumont, still mounted, covered MacKay with his rifle, while the Cree warrior attempted to disarm the scout. In the meantime, Major Crozier saw the Metis advancing through the leafless shrubbery on both sides of the column. He realized they were all but surrounded. Crozier shouted, "Tell those men to go back." When there was no response, Crozier gave the order to open fire. Joe MacKay whipped out his revolver and shot Isidore Dumont and the Cree warrior.[42] The war in the North West had commenced.

During the brief but intense encounter at Duck Lake, the Prince Albert volunteers fought with great courage and audacity, and suffered extremely heavy casualties. Caught in the open under fire coming from three sides, they returned the fire as best they could. There were numerous instances of individual acts of bravery, although their inexperience and lack of training rendered their efforts useless.

The surprising spirit of the volunteers was matched by the courage of the Metis militiamen who were spurred on by the examples of Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel. Early in the battle, Dumont received a severe wound from a bullet that struck him a glancing blow to the top of his head. Bleeding profusely, he nevertheless continued to command his followers and to participate in the fight. Gabriel Dumont tells the story of the battle at Duck Lake:

> While we were fighting Riel was on horseback exposed to the bullets and having no arms except a crucifix which he held in his hand. Upon seeing me fall, my brother Edouard hastened to me to drag me into the ravine, but I told him rather to go to our people who seemed disheartened by my fall. He rallied them; they cheered and commenced firing again. My cousin, Augustine Laframboise, whom I had been advising a few moments before not to expose himself too much, then fell near me. A bullet struck him in the arm and passed through his body. I dragged myself to him, saying to myself that I would go to say a little prayer for him, but in trying to make the sign of the cross with my left hand, my right being paralyzed, I tumbled over and said to him, smiling, "Cousin, I owe that to you." I wished to say for him the prayer I had composed

> when we received the blessing of the priest at Belton in Montana — "Lord, reinforce my courage, my confidence and my faith so that I may profit all my life from the benediction I have received in Thy Holy Name." This is an invocation that I have always recited after my prayers, morning and evening . . . The enemy then commenced to flee and my brother, who after my fall had taken command, cried to our people to pursue and destroy them. Riel then begged for the love of God that no more should be slain, saying that already there had been too much blood spilt.[43]

The Metis, firing from concealed positions at the exposed skirmish line of volunteers, could have annihilated the entire force at Duck Lake, and would have done so had not Louis Riel intervened to stop the slaughter. In the brief fight, lasting just over half an hour, five Metis were killed. The bodies of three policemen and nine volunteers lay in the snow of the *cul-de-sac* where they had been ambushed. Twenty-five others had been wounded, nine of them seriously, and of these, three men later died of their wounds.[44]

On the next day (March 27) Riel addressed the Metis at St. Laurent. Praising Gabriel Dumont, he cried, "Vive Gabriel Dumont. Thank you God for having given us so valorous a leader."[45] The Metis passed the day in praying for their dead, who were buried at St. Laurent. They then made arrangements for the police to come for their dead, with Gabriel Dumont promising safe conduct for the party selected to accomplish this sad mission. As a result, Thomas Jackson led a party out to bring back the dead from Duck Lake.

Gabriel Dumont then made plans to prepare an ambush for the police and volunteers who, having been defeated at Duck Lake, were now quartered at Fort Carlton.

> Had his advice been taken, a terrible massacre might have resulted. However, as Dumont himself tells us, Riel forbade the project, endeavoring all the while to moderate Dumont and his followers. Three men were at last sent out from Prince Albert to recover the bodies of the dead volunteers. The [Metis] had placed them in an old house to preserve them from desecration, and gave what assistance they could to Crozier's emissaries. They also restored to them their wounded prisoners.[46]

Dumont's stories of Riel's kindness and humanitarianism were

comfirmed by others. It is well known that Riel and Dumont took action to ensure that the wounded soldiers left on the field by the retreating corps would not be harmed. The Metis picked up two wounded soldiers, attended to their wounds, and later returned them to Prince Albert when they were well enough recovered to make the journey.[47]

The news of the Metis victory at Duck Lake swept across the North West almost as fast as the messages of defeat were telegraphed to Regina and Ottawa. On April 2, the Cree of Frog Lake rose up and killed Indian agents and priests, in response to the government's practice of withholding food supplies from hungry people.[48] Fort Pitt, a HBC post, was also taken.

The federal government's cynical manipulation of the peoples of the North West Territories had come to its inevitable conclusion. The war of extermination against the "white man" widened as lone settlers were killed by bands of desperate Indians. Although a few settlers were killed, the Cree Indians more often than not spared the lives of settlers throughout the conflict. In all, they killed a total of only fourteen officials and settlers, despite the fact that they were fighting a war that they did not start, for the right to survive in their own homeland.

Nevertheless, terror spread rapidly throughout the North West Territories after the Indians of Frog Lake killed the priests and Indian agents. Whatever support and sympathy for the Metis that had existed on the part of the European settlers prior to the killings was washed away by the fear of a general Indian uprising. Farmers and settlers evacuated to Prince Albert and Battleford. With every useless death on either side generations of hatred were born. As the killings increased, the newspapers clamoured for genocidal military action against the Indians. On April 23, 1885, the Saskatchewan Herald reported:

> It was long ago said to be inevitable, owing to the disappearance of the buffalo from the plains, that the government must either feed the Indians or fight them, and it decided to accept the former alternative . . . Untamed, and untamable, the Indians turned on the hand that fed them with a blind fatuity that seems to say providence has decreed their disappearance and that they should give place to another race, just as the buffalo of the past had given place to domestic cattle.[49]

The article concluded: "This gives weight to the old adage that the only good Indians are the dead ones."[50] Local people forgot their long-standing grievances with the federal government as they anxiously awaited

the coming of government troops to save them from the terror of the impending "massacre."

In the East, the government had mobilized the militia prior to the actual outbreak of hostilities. Five thousand troops recruited from the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba awaited transportation to the front in the North West. As early as March 25, *before* the battle of Duck Lake, the Winnipeg militia, with Sir John A. Macdonald's own son among its ranks, had begun its trek to the North West. By March 30, troops in the eastern cities were lining up at railway stations awaiting passage to the front while bands played martial music.

While these innocent recruits waited with patriotic fervour to be moved to the front, William Cornelius Van Horne was making sure that his subordinates were informed that not only the CPR's credit, but perhaps its very existence, depended upon its ability to get the troops transported to the battlefronts of the North West.[51] The Canadian troops were shipped from the East to Winnipeg by the CPR despite the fact that there were many unfinished sections of track along the line. The troops were hauled over these sections by horses pulling sleighs, though at times the soldiers simply walked. One way or another the CPR moved the troops with amazing speed to the scene of battle in the West.

Some troops were forced to ride in open cars through the bitter winter weather. Two men died of pneumonia en route, while many others suffered from frostbite. Most arrived in poor health because of the unnecessary hardships imposed upon them. And these hardships were unnecessary. The troops could have used the American line from the Canadian East to Saint Paul, Minnesota, where a line connected directly to Winnipeg.

On the night of April 4, the first eastern battalions of Canadians reached Winnipeg. Less than a week later, with General Middleton in command, the first of three strike columns left Qu'Appelle, marching north through the snow towards Batoche. Van Horne and the CPR had indeed performed miracles.

The Metis, too, mobilized a small army to put into the field. This army, however, did not resemble the military units of either their Indian allies or the federal government. The Metis provisional government did not condone murder and pillage, and it ensured that wounded prisoners were cared for. No civilians were ever murdered by the Metis. All matters pertaining to war and the survival of the people were discussed and resolved in council.[52] If a Metis family required food, the matter was

taken before the council for approval before any settler's stock could be taken.

From the day the Metis provisional government was formed (March 19, 1885) to the day in May 1885, when its members were taken away in chains, it ruled with compassion and justice for all. The wounded police and volunteers, as well as the prisoners taken by the Metis, were treated compassionately throughout the struggle. The Metis were, of course, as tolerant with their own troops as they were with the enemy's. Although they imposed a rigid discipline upon the men in battle, they relaxed the rules between fights. One particular Metis soldier, for example, was allowed to leave the campaign and return home in order to "make [his] wife make her Easter duty." [53]

Riel communicated with his various Indian allies, asking the chiefs to see that no civilians be killed. At the same time, the Metis attempted, as best they could, to share some of their own meagre rations with the Indians.[54]

The Canadian troops arriving in Metis country did not behave as well as the Metis. Following orders, they burned Metis homes and destroyed food supplies. These were tactics that had been developed by the British in India and elsewhere to put down guerilla resistance movements in occupied areas. The entire population was to be punished in this way, so that dissention and dissatisfaction might be cultivated among the population against the guerilla fighters and the resistance leaders.

When the Canadian troops arrived from the East some five thousand strong, the Metis, with about three hundred men armed only with smoothbore weapons and little ammunition, were ill-prepared for war. After the battle of Duck Lake, they did not engage the Canadians again until they met General Middleton's army at Fish Creek on April 24, 1885.

Following is Gabriel Dumont's account of the battle of Fish Creek, or Tourond's Coulee, as it was known to the Metis:

> We set out at dusk, the night of April 23rd. Our band consisted of 200 men: Metis, Saulteaux, Crees, Sioux and Canadians. Riel accompanied us. At our halts he made us recite the rosary.
>
> Eight miles from Batoche, at the farm of Roger Goulet, who had fled, I had two of his cows slaughtered for food. We were scarcely through supper when two Metis, Noel Champagne and Moise Carriere, who had stayed at Batoche, with my brother Edouard and some thirty men to guard the place, came

to warn us that the mounted police were coming, by the Qu'Appelle road, to surprise Batoche, and that Edouard wanted thirty men and either Riel or myself. I replied that I had set out in order to go and attack Middleton and that I wouldn't go back, Riel agreed to comply with Edouard's request, and I gave him fifty men from my force.

It was daybreak before we were in sight of Middleton, who was encamped at the McIntosh farm.

I thought it wise to retire and go and wait for the enemy at Tourond's Coulee, known among us as Little Beaver River, which flows from west to east, into the right of the Saskatchewan river. The Tourond family lived on the right bank of this stream.

I had given orders not to follow the road from Clarke's Crossing to Dumont's Ferry cutting across the coulee at the Touronds', in order not to leave any tracks, but this order was not followed by our young men, who allowed themselves to become involved in chasing cattle.

I set out about four in the morning with Napoleon Nault, to reconnoitre the enemy camp, and I went ahead about half a mile from the place where I left him. I dismounted on a piece of high ground. As I saw the enemy scouts, pursuing our scouts, I tried to draw them into the woods. I heard them sounding the bugle, but they didn't dare to follow us.

We returned to the Tourond's place where I had a bull killed for breakfast.

Around seven o'clock, a scout, Gilbert Breland, warned us that a column of about 800 men was advancing upon us. I therefore placed 130 of my men in a hollow, on the left bank of Fish Creek, opposite the Tourond's house, and I had the horses hidden in the woods. I left with 20 horsemen to take cover further ahead along the path to be followed by the troops, with the idea of not charging them until they should be thrust back by the others, and I gave orders to my principal force not to attack them until they were all in the coulee. I wanted to treat them as we would buffalo.

But, having seen the tracks left by our young men the English half-breeds, who were with the troops, gave them warning, and they halted to wait for the main body of their army, while sending scouts to explore the coulee.

One of them came towards me, but I didn't want to waste my cartridges for so little. He saw us and fled. I followed him

and I was about to overtake him when someone fired a shot; my men shouted to me that I would fall into the hands of a group of about forty men whom I hadn't noticed, so intent was I on capturing my prey. When I saw I hadn't time to hit the runaway over the head, I shot him, and plunged down into the coulee to join my twenty horsemen, while the policemen were dismounting.

It was then twenty past seven.

They began firing on us.

Several of my comrades left me at this time and fled to where my group of 130 was, a good number of them had also taken flight.

I tied my horse up and went down into the coulee on foot to be closer to the enemy. There I found a young Indian, and I began to shoot. Middleton might, as a matter of fact, have had a shot pierce his fur cap, as he said in his report, but he can congratulate himself that I didn't recognize him.

When they saw I was making things too hot for them, they began directing their shots into the thicket where I was. The breaking of the branches all around me, warned me that it wasn't wise to stay there. I don't know if I killed many men, because I took cover immediately after each shot, but I couldn't have missed often.

Returning again to the few horsemen remaining with me, I met some Sioux who told me one of their men had been killed on the slope. I climbed up to get his weapons, but his comrades had already relieved him of them. I found the wounded wretch, flat on the ground and singing. I asked him if he were mortally wounded, he said no. The bullets were whistling thick and fast there. I crawled back on all fours, with a few of my men to get a better aim, but we were unable to stay there, because the police were then spread out in the surrounding clumps of trees, on both sides of the coulee, and we were too exposed.

Napoleon Nault, who was one of the few remaining brave fellows with me, shouted to me "Let's join the men who are getting out of here." I jumped on my horse and dashed to the body of 130, which was considerably reduced in numbers by the flight of some of the men, and I halted about fifteen of the fugitives, the rest escaped. Of my detachment of 130, there remained only 47 men, and of my 20 horsemen, I counted only 15.

I said to the young men, "Don't be afraid of the bullets, they won't hurt you" and I showed them how to shoot to hit their mark. And they began to shout for joy. The cannon continued to roar all the time.

We went down into a hollow in the prairie, which was closer to the enemy lines; I saw an officer who was aiming at us; I hastened to finish him off, and our young men began to laugh derisively when they heard him crying like a child.

We kept them in check all day, because I kept firing hard, and so that I could do so more quickly, the young fellows about me kept supplying me with cartridges which were rapidly becoming exhausted. When I saw there were only seven cartridges left, I decided to set fire to the prairie grass to make the enemy, who found themselves facing the wind, withdraw. I figured on going, under cover of the smoke, to pick up the ammunition and arms which they would abandon in their flight. I instructed my men to shout and sing during this operation.

I carried out my plan, and I followed the thickest cloud of smoke before which the red coats fled without looking behind them. I went to search their dead for cartridges and arms, but they had been stripped of them.

I returned to my fifteen men in the hollow in the prairie and who thought that I was lost.

I told the Sioux who were with me that I was going to try to get into the woods behind the enemy ranks, and make them believe in this way that we were strong in numbers. A young Indian told me: "If you leave us, we shall run away."

I reassured him by telling him I was going to see my 47 companions remaining in the coulee. As a matter of fact, I did leave to go there, but I wasn't able to reach them, because they were surrounded by enemy riflemen, who, having crossed the coulee lower down, had gone up the other side through the bush, and their cannon kept spitting forth grapeshot.

Nevertheless my soldiers in the coulee were fighting well, and were encouraging each other. Isidore Dumas however became afraid; so, to reassure himself, he began to sing an old song of Napoleon 1st, and all the others joined in chorus, and they all took new courage.

Not being able to rejoin them, I returned towards the men remaining in the clump of trees on the prairie. My Sioux had slipped away from me and I found myself with only seven men. I tried again to reach the men fighting in the coulee, but it was

impossible for me to go there without exposing myself to certain death.

I took my seven companions to eat at Calixte Tourond's house. It was sundown.

I was hoping for help from Batoche. But Riel did not want to let the men go; he reassured the people, telling them no great harm would come to us.

However my brother Edouard, hearing the cannon, had begged Riel to let him go. Finally he said, "When my own flesh and blood are in danger I cannot stay here," and he hastened to us with 80 horsemen.

I had already succeeded in working around the enemy lines, and the police had fallen back although the volunteers continued the battle. They dived into the clumps of trees behind them and hearing our shouts, they fled, leaving a lot of baggage. The medical officer forgot and left behind on the field of battle, his box of medicines and two bottles of brandy, in which we drank his health.

I suggested we follow them, but my men were soaked and chilled to the bone, for it had rained all day.

It was then about eight o'clock at night.

Thanks to Providence, in the whole day of continuous and desperate fighting, we lost only 4 men; that is to say: 2 Sioux, my nephew St. Pierre and Jose Vermette. Two others were wounded: Francois Boyer, my nephew, and Michel Desjarlais, who died three days later.

We picked up our dead and wounded, and set out towards Batoche.

These were the losses that we suffered and which Middleton, in his report, estimated at a considerable number, in the same way as he claimed that we had left behind a large quantity of provisions, whereas we had left nothing at all, unless it be the bull I had had killed at Calixte Tourond's, and a few chickens which we had eaten and which came from Isaac Tourond's hen house.

He is mistaken also when he speaks of rifle pits which were nothing more than footpaths hollowed out by the passage of animals in the woods.

General Middleton could not himself have seen the things he claims, and others have obviously deceived him. It was just as easy for him to believe these exaggerations, as it was difficult for him, more than any other person, to believe that

a handful of poorly armed men, could, for a whole day, have held in check and put to flight, almost 1600 men armed from head to foot and served with artillery.

It is useless for Middleton to estimate our force at 300 men; of the 150 we were when we met the enemy, we remained 47 and 7, and we were only 54 in number, when at the end of the day, Edouard Dumont's 80 horsemen came to our assistance.

I noticed, during the fighting, that there were men speaking French among the enemy, because I heard them cursing us in that language.

The enemy admit having had in this case 10 dead and 40 wounded; however I believe I saw more dead than that in the prairie fire.

It was growing light, on April 24th, when we entered Batoche.

I attribute our success to Riel's prayers; all during the engagement, he prayed with his arms crossed and he made the women and children pray, telling them that we could come to no great harm.

Riel asked me to give him a report of the battle. I told him what had happened the day before, despite my fatigue and the pain which the wound in my head was giving me.

Our dead were carried into a house, and the next day they were buried in the cemetary of St. Antoine de Batoche. The two wounded Metis, Frs. Boyer and Michel Desjarlais, were, on Riel's order, nursed by the English prisoners who were then at Batoche.

One day while making Desjarlais' bed, the mother Batoche and my wife, who had come to help nurse the sick, found under the straw mattress a piece of the skull of the unfortunate patient, who was then unable to speak. I informed Riel that it would be foolish to use the English prisoners from now on for the hospital work.

Besides, the Indians wanted to kill them every time they met them, and I did not want to take the responsibility of protecting them any longer, after this discovery. The prisoners were accordingly no longer permitted to leave their prison.[55]

The battle at Tourond's Coulee was decidely a victory for the Metis. Once again under the brilliant leadership of Gabriel Dumont, a handful of Metis marksmen, firing from concealed positions, took a heavy toll

of the Canadian troops. This battle was a serious setback for General Middleton and his raw recruits from Eastern Canada. He now felt a new respect for the tenacity, ability and courage of the Metis and became over-cautious despite his advantage in both weaponry and troops. Not until May 9, 1885, did he once again prepare for a frontal assault on an entrenched Metis position.

During the lull between the battle of Fish Creek and the battle of Batoche, which took place between May 9 and 13, the Metis were hemmed in and isolated from their potential allies, the northern Cree. The Cree had been engaged by a column of troops at Cut Knife Hill on April 30.[56] Just before General Middleton attacked Batoche, where some three hundred poorly equipped Metis were dug in behind well-camouflaged positions, he unwisely split his strike force into two columns, leaving about half his troops on the wrong side of the Saskatchewan River. Nevertheless, on the morning of May 9, his army of some 724 officers and men was in position to strike at the Metis defenders of Batoche.

Following is Gabriel Dumont's account of the battle of Batoche:

> Meanwhile Middleton was encamped at Fish Creek, on the right bank of the Saskatchewan, where he had brought his left column back across the river, waiting for reinforcements and especially the arrival of the steamer Northcote which was descending the river with provisions, two companies of the Midland Regiment, and a Gatling gun.
>
> The vessel which had been put in a state of defence with pieces of wood sacks of oats etc., having arrived at Fish Creek, on May 5, Middleton embarked 35 men of "C" Company, School Corps, and set out on the 7th for Gabriel Dumont's ferry, where he halted and the boat anchored.
>
> This ferry is 30 miles from Clarke's Crossing and 6 miles from Batoche.
>
> It was there my farm was located. The troops burned my house and pulled down my stables to strengthen their steamer which they made arrow proof all round. They also destroyed the outbuildings of my neighbour Jose Vandal.
>
> On May 8, Middleton marched eastwards, then northwest on the open prairie, for fear of being surprised.
>
> The English troops debouched about 9 miles from Batoche, on the main road from Humboldt to Batoche, and they set up camp there for the night.
>
> It was my wish to go to meet them among the wooded

groves, because I knew well that if our men were to fight at Batoche, their resolution would be weakened by the cries and tears of the women and children.

When I learned that the enemy had torn down my stables to strengthen their steamer, I concluded the steamer was descending to Batoche to take part in the impending attack and to divert the attention of a part of the defenders. These were in fact the orders which Middleton had given.

I had a body of men placed opposite the Batoche church, to keep the crew from landing. Since the boat, which had set out on the 9th, had to pass through a rapid caused by a bend in the river, before it could continue on its way, I had suggested that at this spot we cripple the helmsman, so as to set the boat adrift, and that an iron cable, thrown across the river, would make the vessel capsize.

My men did, in fact, fire on those who were on deck and several of them threw themselves into the water. And the boat, as I had foreseen, went adrift. I galloped on horseback along the bank to give the signal to lower the cable, but it was done too slowly, the cable only caught the funnel which was torn away and a fire started. The crew however extinguished it, although my men fired on any that showed themselves on deck.

Arriving at a widening of the river, opposite the home of my late brother Isidore, the boat dropped anchor about 9 in the morning of the tenth. They were kept there in check all day long, and in spite of the bugle calls, no one came to their aid, and it was not until 6 at night that they raised anchor and went a few miles further down stream to moor for the night.

Meanwhile Middleton, encamped on Jean Caron's farm, where he had had earth works built, pushed forward on the hill at Batoche, about half a mile from the new catholic church, at the place where the road overlooks the river before turning and going down into Batoche.

The enemy began firing with several shots from the Gatling gun, and then advanced to the top of a little hill dominating Batoche.

Seeing them advancing, I had my riflemen posted on the slope of the hill, spead over an area of a mile and a half.

We numbered about 175 men, besides the squad of 30 men who were watching the Northcote.

The fighting began around nine in the morning and lasted

all day without the enemy being able to advance.

I stayed well forward on the prairie, seated on one heel with a knee on the ground; my men were lying flat on the ground.

The cannon which had been brought into action on a knoll, about a mile away, constantly threw shells into Batoche, and into the Baker house from which the flag of the Holy Virgin was flying, on the other side of the river. Another flag of Our Lord was in our midst, on the Council house.

The red hot cannon balls landed two or three times on the wooden exterior of Baker's house, setting fire to it, but the fire was put out as though by a miracle.

An old deaf man by the name of Norbert Sauve, who was in the house, didn't realize that they were firing on it from this side, until one of the cannon balls went right through it from one end to the other. Then someone ran in to tell him to flee.

We held the enemy in check for three days, and each night they went back into their holes. And during those three days, they didn't kill a single man; they only hit some dummies which we stuck up for them and on which they concentrated their shots.

During the fighting Riel walked about unarmed in front of the lines, encouraging the fighters.

Meanwhile, the Northcote could have slipped away towards Prince Albert, but it seems, according to Captain Smith's report, that they came back upstream to Batoche with the steamer Marquis; but they did not arrive until May 13, that is, after the battle was over.

We learned from a thoroughly reliable source: Middleton even though he had received reinforcements, despaired of defeating us, when some traitors, whom I don't wish to name, advised him that we were almost out of ammunition, and that, apart from a few, all the Metis were discouraged. That besides, if the besiegers didn't hurry, aid would soon arrive to reinforce the beseiged.

These traitors were continually in communication with the enemy and with those of our men whom they persuaded to lay down their arms by offering them a safe conduct.

What contributed greatly to the confusion of our soldiers, was that they were refused all religious aid, for themselves, their wives and their children!!

On the fourth day, the 12th of May, around 2 o'clock in the afternoon, on definite information furnished by those who

betrayed us, that we had no more ammunition, the troops advanced and our men came out of their trenches; it was then were killed: Jose Ouellet, 93 years of age; Jose Vandal, who had both arms broken first and was finished off with a bayonet, 75 years; Donald Ross, first fatally wounded and speared with a bayonet, also very old; Isidore Boyer, also an old man; Michel Trottier, Andrė Batoche, Calixte Tourond, Elzear Tourond, John Swan and Damase Carriere, who first had his leg broken and whom the English then dragged with a rope around his neck tied to the tail of a horse. There were two Sioux also killed.

The balance sheet of these four days of desperate fighting was for us, three wounded and 12 dead, as well as a child killed, the only victim during the campaign of the famous Gatling gun.

The report of Graveley, the brigade surgeon, testified that during the attack on Batoche, from May 9 to May 12, the army lost 8 dead and that there were 46 wounded.

I want my report to be exact, but I believe that as at Duck Lake, those brave Englishmen only collected the bodies of the regulars, and left behind the bodies of the volunteers.

When the troops entered Batoche, they numbered several thousand; our men had at first fallen back half a mile. I myself, stayed on the high ground with six of my brave fellows. I held up the advance of the enemy for an hour. What kept me at my post, I must admit, was the courage of old Ouellet. Several times I said to him, "Father, we must retreat." And the old fellow replied "Wait a minute! I want to kill another Englishman." Then I said, "All right, let us die here."

When he was hit, I thanked him for his courage, but I could not stay there any longer, and I withdrew towards my comrades from whom I learned that a barrel of powder had been left behind in young Tourond's tent.

I went with Charles Tourond to look for it, and he gave it to one of our men. I then went down the side of the river where I met 7 or 8 men, who, like many others, were in flight. I asked them to come with me and lie in wait for the enemy. When they refused, I threatened to shoot the first one who tried to escape. Then they came with me and we again held the English in check for half an hour.

We turned back again along the river where I met the man to whom Charles Tourond had given the barrel of powder and he told me he had left it in a house which he pointed out to

me, about 7 arpents from the enemy. I told him to go and get it, he admitted he was afraid, so I asked one of my nephews, Honore Smith, if he was afraid too. "Hold my gun and my shoes," he said to me, "and I'll dash over there." As a matter of fact, he brought me back the barrel.

After that I rejoined a group of our friends who had taken refuge in a large wood where Riel was urging them to fight. When he saw me he said, "What are we going to do? We are beaten." I told him, "We must die; you must have known that in taking up arms, we should be defeated. Very well, they must destroy us."

I then told Riel I must go to our camp to look for some blankets. He told me I was exposing myself too much. I replied that the enemy could not kill me. And I confess I was afraid of nothing.

I then went to the tent where the blankets were, about 50 yards from a house where the mounted police were. I saw a policeman in the doorway and I knocked him off his feet; another came to see the body, and I killed him too; I then took two blankets and two quilts which I carried to my wife who was in the woods where our people had taken refuge, about 600 yards from our camp. I instructed her to give these coverings to Madame Riel for herself and her children during the night; but Riel didn't want to take anything but the blankets.

I went back to our camp to look for some dried meat and flour. This time, I saw no one, I instructed my wife to divide the food among the women who had children.

When I saw the others wanted to seek safety still further away, I asked my wife to wait for me there, telling her: "If the enemy captures you and blames you for my actions, you tell them that since the government couldn't manage me, it wasn't easy for you to do so."

Then I left for the third time to look for some horses which had remained in the camp. But the police had reached there and I had to go back to my wife who remained alone in the woods. I led my wife to another patch of woods, and set out again to capture some horses. On the way, my attention was attracted by a white object which I twice called upon to answer; and it was when I threatened to shoot that I heard a voice say, "It is us." I approached and recognized Madame Vandal, whose husband had been killed, and whose daughter she had carried thus far on her back, because she was paralyzed, but

the poor child was exhausted, and they had stopped there.

I went on a little further, and hearing voices, I laid in wait in a little house. I was getting ready to shoot, when I recognized three Metis who were looking for something to eat. They had a sack of flour.

At that moment I saw a Sioux horse and a Canadian stallion. I told the Metis to take the one and I would take the other. And I went towards the river bank with the stallion on a rope. I met Henry Smith and young John Ross, whom I asked if they had seen any horses. They told me they had seen some running loose, and they helped me to catch a mare. I saw a house where I took a few dishes, and I tied the horses up there while I went to find my wife. The neighing of the stallion had attracted a band of horses, and thinking it was the police I waited for them without stirring, resolved to knock over a few of them. When I saw they were horses I let the stallion go with them.

I put my wife with the sack of flour on the mare, and I led it to a clump of trees where we camped. I was only in shirt sleeves and it was not warm.

The next day I hid my wife a little further away, and I went back to the river to try to find Riel.

I saw the houses at Batoche, and below Batoche with white flags flying from the roofs. I saw that everyone was surrendering. I learned that the group on the other shore, led by Napoleon Nault had also given themselves up. Then I met James Short with two women who were fleeing, as well as a Sioux, who told me he had left his horse further along the hill. As I was going to look for it I saw the three young Trottiers who came with me, and they and I each caught an abandoned horse. I went back to find my wife, and then I began looking about for scattered families whose tracks I followed. Not far from there, I found a group of women and children as well as a few men. My brother Elie had killed a cow to feed them, and he had cut some hay to cover them.

It was distressing to see these poor creatures lying in the hay like animals. Seeing the bare feet of the children, I made them a kind of shoe out of rawhide. The women appeared very brave and even laughed over their situation.

I looked for Riel for four days despite the urging of my wife who begged me to cross the frontier so as not to be caught. I couldn't make up my mind to leave without knowing where

my unfortunate friend was.

On the third day I sent my wife to my father's home, three miles from Batoche. I followed to protect her and didn't leave her until she was out of danger, telling her that I should go to see my father that night.

All the time I was hunting for Riel I was picking up ammunition.

There were a couple of hundred horsemen looking for me in front while I was behind them. I hid myself in the woods during the night, and I watched them on the hill during the day, determined to knock over those who left the main body.

The night my wife went to my father's house, I went there and acquainted him with my plan to spend the summer harrying the police. He told me it was a bad idea. "I am proud," he said to me, "you haven't given in, but if you follow your idea of staying to kill people, you will be looked upon as a silly fool," and he advised me to go across the border. I told him that I had always taken his advice, and that I wanted very much to follow it again, I told him I would leave if I didn't find Riel.

My father then informed me that Moise Ouellet, my brother-in-law, had a letter from Middleton for Riel. I went to see Ouellet who told me that the letter had been read to him and that it said in it that Riel and I should have justice. I said to Ouellet, "Go to the devil! the government has skinned you like sheep; it has taken your arms from you and now you are doing just as you are told." He put it up to me that they had surrendered out of love for their children.

"You tell Middleton," said I to him, "that I am in the woods, and that I still have 90 cartridges to use on his men."

I saw Ouellet again, he told me he had given the letter to Riel, and, he added, "he went immediately to see the English general." I had the idea of catching up to Riel before he gave himself up at the enemy camp, but Ouellet led me to believe that he had already surrendered, although this wasn't true.

The good Lord did not wish me to see poor Riel again, I wanted to advise him not to surrender; but he might well have won me over to his way of thinking.

When I saw I was the only one left, I made up my mind to take refuge in the territory of the United States. It was May 16.

I sent one of my nephews, Alexis Dumont, son of Jean, to get some dry cakes from my father, and to tell my wife I was leaving.

He brought me six cakes about three quarters of a pound each. These were all the provisions I took with me for a journey of 600 miles. Jean Dumont, my brother, and a few young men came to say good bye to me.

I saddled my horse, which was the best charger in Batoche, and they came with me to the edge of the wood.

I had only gone 100 yards when I heard some one shout behind me, I saw Michel Dumas, who had formerly accompanied me to Montana, when I had gone to look for Riel. He wanted to go across the line with me. He was unarmed, and he too had only a few dried cakes for provisions.

We set out by the grace of God.[57]

During this short but brutal war, Canadian and Metis blood had been shed at Duck Lake, Fish Creek and Batoche. Canadians and Indians died and were maimed at Cut Knife Hill. European priests and government officials had been shot at Frog Lake. Several isolated settlers were killed and their cabins burned in remote districts of the territory. Fort Carlton had been burned to the ground during the police evacuation; the mystery of how the fire started has never been solved. But the HBC received generous compensation from the federal government for its loss. Battleford had been looted and burned. Many Metis homes had been burned and their food supplies were destroyed by Canadian troops.

During the entire campaign, a total of twenty-two Metis and Indians were killed. Many wounded Metis and Indians fled from the authorities without treatment. It is therefore impossible to estimate the number of Metis and Indians who were wounded in action or died later from their wounds. Canadian casualties were much heavier. Frontal charges against well-selected, camouflaged entrenchments accounted for many Canadian deaths. Forty-five Canadians were killed in action, and three died from pneumonia and exposure. A total of fourteen civilians were killed by various Indian bands, including the nine priests and government officials at Frog Lake. In all, sixty-two Canadians died as a direct result of the rebellion.[58]

The cost to the government of suppressing the Metis greatly exceeded the overall cost of those Metis land claims whose prior settlement would have prevented the war. On top of the military costs, estimated at $5 million, 1,308 war claims were made, totalling $2,918,024.[59] Thomas McKay was placed in charge of war reparations. His generous payments to the HBC for its loss of Fort Carlton became the material of yet another

scandal in the Prince Albert district after 1885.[60]

When the war ended, the Tory government was brought to task for having caused it in the first place. In the House of Commons, the Liberal opposition demanded answers. Under the cross-examination of Edward Blake, the government was called upon to explain why it had used troops against the Metis. Why had it not responded to their peaceful petitions? Why had the government concealed the existence of petitions and not informed Parliament about them? Why had Parliament not been informed of the many Metis petitions that had remained buried in the Department of the Interior for years? Why did the government acknowledge the crisis in the North West by sending troops instead of dealing with Metis land claims as they had done for the English Metis and European settlers?

In July 1885, Prime Minister Macdonald, now aged and ailing, rose in Parliament to defend the actions his government had taken in the North West prior to and during the Metis rebellion of 1885. The Prime Minister produced a document that he said would justify his govenment's use of the military to solve the problems in the North West. The document was an unsigned letter from a resident of the North West Territories. (See Appendix D)

The ultimate justification for the government's initial inaction and its later military intervention, then, rested on the written advice given to the Prime Minister by an unidentified person in the North West. The letter was later positively identified as Lawrence Clarke's by his personal secretary, Joseph Parker.[61] Like Clarke's mischievous letter of 1875, it had taken a circuitous route to its destination. It went from Clarke to the HBC's Chief Commissioner, James Graham, and then to the Prime Minister in Ottawa. The Macdonald government hid Clarke's role in the rebellion and prevented it from being debated in Parliament. In fact, after the rebellion was over, the government dissociated itself publicly from Lawrence Clarke. Norman Black wrote:

> In view of the severe criticism to which Mr. Dewdney and the Ottawa authorities were naturally subjected for not seeing the rebellion, the question arises as to why, in self-defense, no public reference was ever made to Mr. Clarke's share in bringing it about.[62]

There may be very good reason why the federal government made no reference to Clarke's role as the *provocateur* of the war with the Metis.

There is no indication that Sir John A. Macdonald or any other member of the government intended to participate in a conspiracy to bring on a Metis rebellion prior to the summer of 1884. But Clarke's letter to the Prime Minister must have identified him as a man who might be used if such a course became necessary. By June 1884, it must have occurred to government officials in Ottawa that there was a useful alignment of interest between its own need for a rebellion as a means of saving the CPR and Lawrence Clarke's need for a rebellion as a means of bringing prosperity back to the North West.

It is likely that Lawrence Clarke made a deal with the federal government during his February 1885 trip to Ottawa as an emissary of the Metis. His actions upon his return stand as strong evidence that a conspiracy to provoke a rebellion did occur during that critical meeting. If there is any doubt that the war was created as a means of bringing prosperity to the clique of Conservative speculators in Prince Albert, it should be dispelled by a statement contained in a letter to the Prime Minister, dated August 1886, from Henry J. Clarke, former attorney general of Manitoba, who had served under Lieutenant Governor Archibald. Henry J. Clarke (no relation to Lawrence Clarke) had been engaged as a defense lawyer for some of the Metis involved in the 1885 rebellion. Clarke stated:

> As you are aware I defended Scott, the white rebel of Prince Albert, and secured his acquittal . . . I also appealed to the court affidavits on behalf of the French [Metis] who had been forced to plead guilty . . . I know every man of any importance in any way hooked up with the Rebellion, every man who took an open or secret part in goading the ignorant [Metis] into Rebellion, the personal object of every man of any importance in getting up the Rebellion.[63]

While it is unlikely that positive proof of a government conspiracy to create a rebellion in the West will ever be uncovered, one thing is abundantly clear: Riel, Dumont and other Metis leaders did not want this war. Both they and the police under the command of Major Crozier were provoked and actually tricked into the battle of Duck Lake through the actions of Lawrence Clarke. Once blood had been shed, war was inevitable. The only clear winner from this war was the CPR.

The evidence presented here suggests that the rebellion may have been fostered by the federal government, using Lawrence Clarke as an *agent*

provocateur, as a means of making it politically possible to get further funding for the bankrupt CPR in 1885. History has shown that Macdonald had gauged the public mind correctly. After the war was over, he had little difficulty in obtaining sufficient public funds to save the company. The 1885 conflict had clearly saved the CPR from financial ruin. It also saved the Conservative government's national policy, and consequently the government, from certain disaster.

Lawrence Clarke did not live long enough to benefit from the war which he did so much to create. He died at Prince Albert on October 8, 1890, at the age of 58.[64]

Fugitives and Prisoners

The rebellion may have given Lawrence Clarke much satisfaction before he died, and it paid off handsomely for the remainder of the Conservative clique in Prince Albert. But it put an end to the traditional way of life for the Metis of the West. When Riel and Dumont met for the last time near Batoche, with the smoke of battle still lingering in the air, Riel, distraught and in mourning for their fallen comrades, asked of Dumont, "What are we going to do?" Dumont quietly replied, "We are defeated. We shall perish. But you must have known when we took up arms that we would be beaten. So they will destroy us."[65]

As the two great Metis leaders separated in defeat and despair, Riel knew that for him there could be no escape. If there was to be any lasting benefit from the sacrifices made and the misery endured, he had to surrender and stand trial so that, at last, the Metis case could be heard.

Shortly after his last meeting with Dumont, Riel rode out alone to meet the enemy who were carrying out a massive search for him and for Gabriel Dumont. He soon encountered two police scouts. Calmly, and of his own accord, he rode up to them, identified himself, and turned over his only weapon, a small .22 revolver, with the remark, "Perhaps it is better if you have this."[66]

Riel was placed in the custody of General Middleton and his officers, who treated him well enough until he was transported under heavy guard to Regina. There he was imprisoned to await a mockery of a trial, the outcome of which had been largely arranged in advance by the federal Conservative government. Joseph Royal, the French Canadian M.P. for

Provencher, had learned that it was the government's intention to hang Riel, but beyond writing about his concerns to Bishop Tache, he did nothing to expose this government interference in the case.[67] Royal was later rewarded for his silence in this scandal: he became the Lieutenant Governor of the North West Territories on July 4, 1888.

When Gabriel Dumont bid farewell to his old friend and chief for the last time on May 12, he, unlike Riel, was prepared to die rather than surrender. Riel was forced to surrender in order to fulfill his political destiny, but Dumont could carry on the struggle only as a free man.

His first commitment was to his wife, Madeleine. He took her to his father, Isidore, despite the danger involved. Hundreds of troops were scouring the countryside in search of him and the few other insurgents who had avoided capture at Batoche.

On the following day, Dumont made his break for the American border, armed with his famous rifle "Le petit" and 90 cartridges, as well as a revolver with 40 rounds of ammunition. On the first and most perilous day of his journey, he met and joined with another fugitive, Michel Dumas, a loud and aggressive man who had fought well under him during the conflict. Dumont had no provisions other than the six heavy galettes (Metis bannock) to share with his companion on the journey.

By a direct route, the US boundary lay 480 kilometers to the south. But Dumont and Dumas felt that government troops would have the most direct route well covered, so they stuck to rough terrain, travelling in a southwesterly direction. They passed near the present site of Elbow on the Saskatchewan River; from there, travelling only by night, they moved on to Maple Creek, then south through the Cypress Hills to the Montana border and, they hoped, safety. In all, their journey covered some 960 kilometers. They were provisioned and aided by Metis and Indians along the way. Incredibly, they were not accosted or challenged by government troops during the entire escape.[68] Once across the border, however, the fugitives were arrested and held by the American military.

When news of the arrest of this famous and much respected fugitive was released, it did not take long for the arrest to become a political rather than legal issue in the USA. The issue of Dumont's arrest went all the way up the political chain of command to the President's office. President Grover Cleveland, recognizing the degree of popularity that Dumont had among American voters, set Dumont free on May 29, 1885.

No request had been made by Prime Minister Macdonald to President

Cleveland to have Dumont extradited to stand trial with Louis Riel. The question of Riel's fate was fast becoming a heated issue that created a major crisis between Quebec and Ontario, threatening serious political instability in Canada. Quebec politicians, who had done nothing for the Metis during their prolonged economic and brief military struggles with the federal government, now eagerly took up the question of amnesty for Riel. But their actions were really geared towards harnessing the political energy of the Quebecois along the St. Lawrence, rather than pushing for a redress of Metis grievances in the West. Prime Minister Macdonald, engaged in this no-win political controversy regarding Riel, did not wish to compound his problems by trying the popular and still politically volatile Gabriel Dumont.

Sir John A. Macdonald, however, was determined to silence Riel and make an example of him at the same time. Macdonald recognized that his own political fortune was tied to the Orangemen of Ontario, not the Catholics of Quebec. He felt that so long as Riel was alive he posed a serious threat to the Conservatives' national policy. Riel seemed to have an almost mystical ability to inspire the discontented elements in the West to resist the federal government's planned exploitation of the region. At the height of the furor raised by Canadians over Riel's death sentence, Prime Minister Macdonald shouted, "He shall hang, though every dog in Quebec bark in his favor."[69]

Riel had been charged with high treason on July 6, 1885. This was a charge that called for the death penalty upon conviction. All other leaders of the resistance were charged with the lesser crime of treason felony, which did not call for capital punishment. Hugh Richardson, the magistrate chosen to try Riel, was a Conservative insider who had served Macdonald well on previous occasions; it was Richardson who had crushed the revolt that occurred in Prince Albert in 1882, when the irate citizenry took to the streets to protest the patronage given Lawrence Clarke during the telegraph scandal.

The jury chosen consisted of six men, all of Protestant English stock. Even so, the jury was more compassionate than Judge Richardson. The jury had recommended clemency for Riel, but Richardson, ignoring their plea for mercy, obediently passed the death sentence.

Richardson should have been disqualified to judge Riel before the trial began. Joseph Kinsey Howard wrote:

> The defence overlooked, or chose to ignore, a letter he had written in 1880 to the Ministry of the Interior. It urged prompt

dealing with Metis grievances because the Metis colonies had been "latterly subjected to the evil influences of leading spirits of the Manitoba troubles." These "influences" had been circulating in the Saskatchewan "doing at least 'no good.' " This characterization of Metis leadership as evil and up to no good should have cast some doubt upon his fitness to judge the man whom the Metis regarded as the greatest leader of them all.

Yet Richardson's conduct of the trial, at least up to the time he gave his charge to the jury, was above reproach. His charge, while perhaps legally sound (no exception was taken to it on appeal), was definitely prejudicial, and the wording of the sentence would seem to have been unnecessarily cruel.[70]

This was not simply an ethnic struggle, however; this was not simply an English plot to kill Riel. Metis and Quebec principals did even more harm to Riel's defence than their British counterparts. Philippe Garnot, secretary of Riel's 1885 provisional government, turned against Riel at the trial, calling him crazy.[71] Garnot insisted that Riel had used armed men to force him to join the rebellion. Father André painted Riel as a manipulative demon concerned only with obtaining money for himself. Indeed, it was André's description of Riel's request for recompense for the loss of his Winnipeg property that became the focus of much of the trial.

Dr. Francois Roy, who had treated Riel at Beauporte years earlier, testified that Riel was a victim of megalomania. He claimed that Riel was of unsound mind when the rebellion broke out.

But it was Charles Nolin's evidence that did the most harm to Riel's defence. Nolin was so vindictive that his testimony against his former chief provided much of the basis for the eventual passing of the death sentence. The motives for Nolin's behaviour in court are still not clear. Surely this was the work of a man who had all along been an agent of the federal government. Certainly Nolin's testimony indicates that he was a traitor to the Metis cause, a cause that he had pretended to support during the early part of the resistance. Nolin had been rewarded with fat government contracts before the trial, and this information was made public at the trial; yet, as far as the Crown was concerned, it did not detract from the weight of his evidence.

Riel refused to let his attornies plead insanity. Instead, he pleaded much of his own case. His defense, despite the fact that he had to speak in

the English language instead of his own tongue, was both brilliant and persuasive; so much so that it should have put to rest the question of his "insanity." By refusing to allow his lawyer to plead insanity he hoped to maintain the legitimacy and the credibility of the Metis' historical struggle for their rights. During his final address to the court, Riel described what he had hoped to accomplish upon his return to Canada from Montana. (Here Riel used the term "half-breed" to describe both French and English Metis):

> When I came into the North-West in July, the first of July 1884, I found the Indians suffering. I found the half-breeds eating the rotten pork of the Hudson Bay Company and getting sick and weak every day. Although a half-breed, and having no pretension to help the whites, I also paid attention to them. I saw they were deprived of responsible government. I saw that they were deprived of their public liberties. I remembered that half-breed meant white and Indian, and while I paid attention to the suffering Indians and the half-breeds I remembered that the greatest part of my heart and blood was white and I have directed my attention to help the Indians, to help the half-breeds and to help the whites to the best of my ability. We have made petitions, I have made petitions with others to the Canadian Government asking to relieve the condition of this country. We have taken time; we have tried to unite all classes, even if I may speak, all parties . . .[72]

In his speech, Riel turned the tables on his accusers by describing the social system that was being imposed upon the West as insane, since it denied people the right to elect their own government:

> The only things I would like to call your attention to before you retire to deliberate are: 1st That the House of Commons, Senate and Ministers of the Dominion, and who make laws for this land and govern it, are no representation whatever of the people of the North-West.
>
> 2nd That the North-West Council generated by the Federal Government has the great defect of its parent.
>
> 3rd The number of members elected for the Council by the people make it only a sham representative legislature and no representative government at all.
>
> British civilization which rules to-day the world, and the British constitution has defined such government as this is which rules

the North-West Territories as irresponsible government, which plainly means that there is no responsibility, and by all the science which has been shown here yesterday you are compelled to admit if there is no responsibility, it is insane.

Good sense combined with scientific theories lead to the same conclusion. By the testimony laid before you during my trial witnesses on both sides made it certain that petition after petition had been sent to the Federal Government, and so irresponsible is that Government to the North-West that in the course of several years besides doing nothing to satisfy the people of this great land, it has even hardly been able to answer once or to give a single response. That fact would indicate an absolute lack of responsibility, and therefore insanity complicated with paralysis.

The Ministers of an insane and irresponsible Government and its little one — the North-West Council — made up their minds to answer my petitions by surrounding me slyly and by attempting to jump upon me suddenly and upon my people in the Saskatchewan. Happily when they appeared and showed their teeth to devour, I was ready: that is what is called my crime of high treason, and to which they hold me to-day. Oh, my good jurors, in the name of Jesus Christ, the only one who can save and help me, they have tried to tear me to pieces.

If you take the plea of the defence that I am not responsible for my acts, acquit me completely since I have been quarrelling with an insane and irresponsible Government. If you pronounce in favor of the Crown, which contends that I am responsible, acquit me all the same. You are perfectly justified in declaring that having my reason and sound mind, I have acted reasonably and in self-defence, while the Government, my accuser, being irresponsible, and consequently insane, cannot but have acted wrong, and if high treason there is, it must be on its side and not on my part . . .[73]

During his speech, Riel made one more point that was completely ignored by the jury, and later by Canadian historians. He pointed out that the Metis did not initiate a rebellion by attacking the police; the police initiated the "rebellion" by attacking the Metis:

> The agitation in the North-West Territories would have been constitutional, and would certainly be constitutional to-day if,